

# Reclamation Manual

## Directives and Standards

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| <b>Subject:</b>            | News Releases and Media Relations  |
| <b>Purpose:</b>            | Prescribes requirements for the Bureau of Reclamation's news releases and media relations. The benefit of this Directive and Standard (D&S) is it provides procedures for communication with the news media including all information material that may be provided to them. |
| <b>Authority:</b>          | Regulations cited and defined in 470 DM 1  |
| <b>Approving Official:</b> | Deputy Commissioner  |
| <b>Contact:</b>            | Office of Communications (92-40000)  |

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1. **Introduction.** News releases and media relations are an integral part of Reclamation's responsibility to keep the public informed in a timely and accurate way about its various programs, activities, and research.
2. **Applicability.**
  - A. This D&S applies to all Reclamation employees.
  - B. This D&S covers all communication to the news media including: news releases, media advisories, formal statements, interviews, press conferences and briefings, letters to the editor, opinion pieces that are opposite the editorial page ("op eds"), technical announcements, and other information or material given to news media representatives, a collective term that includes, but is not limited to, reporters, editors, and writers for newspapers, magazines, journals and trade publications; radio or television stations or networks and online news services; and any other electronic or print media related to news distribution that could serve as an information outlet.
3. **Requirements and Responsibilities.**
  - B. **Chief, Office of Communications.** Reclamation's Chief, Office of Communications has the primary responsibility for all Reclamation's news media relations, including the review and approval of news releases, letters to the editor, and other material released to the public through the news media.
  - C. **Regional Public Affairs Officer(s).** Each Reclamation region has a designated public affairs officer who is responsible for news releases and media relations within the region. The Reclamation Chief of Public Affairs has assigned this responsibility to each regional public affairs officer.
  - D. **All Reclamation Employees.** All employees are responsible for following the review and approval procedures of Commissioner's Office and their regions in accordance with this D&S.

# Reclamation Manual

## Directives and Standards

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- E. **Non-Advocacy.** Reclamation, as a Federal Government agency, must maintain an unbiased and impartial approach to its information. All Reclamation products, materials, and communications with the media must remain neutral and not advocate or persuade. For additional information, contact Reclamation's ethics counselor. Media issues regarding policy issues concerning program funding and pending appropriation or legislation must be referred to the Chief of Public Affairs, in the Commissioner's Office.
- F. **Notification of Release and Required Copy.** As required, all news releases must be provided to the Commissioner's Office of Communications for clearance no later than 96 hours before distribution.
- (1) **Exceptions**
- (a) When Timelines of Release is Critical to Issues of Public Health and Safety. Timely, efficient release of breaking news and information during crises, such as natural disasters or personal tragedies, often requires swift publication and/or dissemination of information. The originating office may issue a brief statement or media advisory to the news media in place of a news release.
- (b) When a news release is local in nature and non-controversial. Examples include a new hire, education workshops, public outreach event, or notice for non-controversial meeting.
- (c) In such cases, the originating office acts at its own discretion in approval and release but must provide the Commissioner's Office of Communications and the appropriate regional public affairs office with copies of any such release of information concurrent with its release to the news media.
- (2) **Op-Eds.** The special nature of op-eds requires approval at the national level. Any op-ed written in an official capacity or based on official expertise must be sent through the regional public affairs officer to the Chief, Office of Communications, for approval, in accordance with 470 DM 1.6 D., before it is submitted to the media outlet. These communication pieces require further approval at the Department level, and sufficient advance planning and coordination time is required.
- G. **Review and Approval - National-Level News Releases.** The Chief, Office of Communications, will determine if any higher-level approval must be obtained and must approve all national-level news releases in accordance with 470 DM 1.5 B. The Chief, Office of Communications, will forward all news releases that require additional approval to appropriate offices in Reclamation and the Department in accordance with 470 DM 1.6 A.

# Reclamation Manual

## Directives and Standards

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### 4. **Definitions.**

- A. **National News.** Information dealing with national or policy issues and/or citing the Commissioner, other members of the Reclamation Leadership Team (excluding regional directors); involving Presidential or Secretarial policy or initiatives and/or quotes from the Secretary, any Assistant Secretary, other Department of the Interior bureau head or non-Department official; involving appropriations or legislation pending before Congress; or if widespread media coverage is anticipated regarding major policy statements, controversial issues, breaking news, or other release of information that are priorities for the current Administration.
- B. **Op-Ed.** Non-technical articles for publication, letters to the editor, and editorial replies written by employees in their official capacity.
- C. **Public Communications.** Release of information to the public through press releases, media advisories, media events, news features, news media interviews, speeches, statements about official business for public release, letters to the editor, opinion pieces, social media, Internet and Intranet postings, and by other means.

- 5. **Review Period.** The originating office will review this release every four years.

## RECLAMATION MANUAL TRANSMITTAL SHEET

Effective Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Release No. \_\_\_\_\_

Ensure all employees needing this information are provided a copy of this release.

### Reclamation Manual Release Number and Subject

### Summary of Changes

NOTE: This Reclamation Manual release applies to all Reclamation employees. When an exclusive bargaining unit exists, changes to this release may be subject to the provisions of collective bargaining agreements.

### Filing instructions

Remove Sheets

Insert Sheets

All Reclamation Manual releases are available at <http://www.usbr.gov/recman/>

Filed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_