



County of Kauai

Media Response Process

SCOPE: This process applies to all employees of the County of Kaua`i

PROCESS: The process of the County of Kaua`i in providing information to news media representatives is to respond openly and promptly and ensure that responses, written and/or oral, are thorough and accurate before releasing the information to the media and the general public. In order to better facilitate this process, the Mayor has created a Communications Team within his office to work with our county departments, the media, and the general public to ensure the timely and accurate flow of information. The Communications Team consists of Director of Communications (Beth Tokioka), the Public Information Officer (Mary Daubert), and a Public Information Assistant (Sarah Blane). Therefore, staff and members should follow the guidelines below and not proactively distribute information or initiate discussions with media representatives concerning County issues without first consulting with the County of Kaua`i Communications Team – and in particular, the Public Information Officer (PIO).

ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES:

1. All news media inquiries should be referred to the PIO as soon as they are received. It is incumbent upon the PIO to ensure that the department head(s) to which the inquiry pertains have been notified in the event of an inquiry and to agree upon a response.
 - If an employee is contacted by the media, the member should state that per the media response process of the County of Kaua`i, they will immediately pass along the inquiry to the County PIO, who will provide a response to them.
2. The PIO, or an individual that he or she designates, is responsible for determining the nature of the inquiry and deadline for a response, initiating appropriate research, analyzing implications of the inquiry, and preparing a written response for review and final approval.
3. When appropriate, legal, risk management and other County officials will be consulted as needed to provide accurate and thorough information to the media.
4. Final submissions must be sent to the media by the PIO in writing whenever possible
5. All news inquiries should be answered as quickly as possible. Every attempt should be made to respect a reporter's deadlines and to provide a timely response.
6. All news releases and news conferences are to be coordinated through the PIO.
7. Spokespersons, staff, and members are not to give statements "off the record." Any discussions, whether in an informal or formal setting with media representatives, will be considered on-the-record (even if the media representative says that the discussion is "off the record").
8. Employees shall not initiate discussions with the news media without first consulting with the Communications Team.
9. Any deviation from this process shall be discussed and agreed to by the Communications Team in advance.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS:

1. When an emergency occurs and potential impacts threaten the public, urgency in providing information must be demonstrated.
2. The PIO or a designee shall coordinate development and implementation of emergency communications strategies.
3. Qualified spokespersons appointed by the PIO are permitted to provide initial known facts about the incident to reporters until the County of Kaua`i's media response team is in place. Statements are to be limited to known and verifiable facts. At no time should speculation be offered as to unconfirmed details.
4. In emergency situations, a media inquiry is important enough to call County of Kaua`i officials out of meetings.
5. The County of Kaua`i will act quickly to establish itself as the key source of accurate information regarding the incident. This will be done to preclude rumors and to protect the County of Kaua`i's reputation.
6. The PIO will be responsible for contacting the necessary resources to ensure media relations efforts are handled as efficiently and effectively as possible.

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