How to Write a Press Release

PREPARING A NEWS RELEASE

Five points are important to a good CWV news release ... **WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN** and **WHY**. If possible, a sixth **HOW** should be included. It is important to get all these points in the first sentence or two, whether you're writing for newspapers, radio or television. These first sentences are called the **LEAD**. A good **LEAD** captures the attention of a reader, listener or viewer and makes him want to know more about the CWV Echelon activity or project.

Now, go into the details of your story. Each succeeding paragraph should be of declining importance. Professionals call this writing technique the **INVERTED PYRAMID**. It permits an editor to pick up the important facts of your story in the first few lines. Then, if he does not have space or time to use the whole release, he can cut it from the bottom, where least important details are given. This is true of both print and broadcast media. **USE SHORT WORDS**: Write short sentences, short paragraphs ... two sentences make a good paragraph in a news release.

BE BRIEF: Almost every news release can be written on one or two double-spaced typewritten pages. Two pages ... double-spaced will fill about 12 inches ... one newspaper column wide. This is a lot more space than most editors can give one item. **ALWAYS GIVE EXACT DATE IN A NEWS RELEASE**: "May 15" rather than "next Thursday" or "tomorrow." Specify "June" not "next month." Double check the date and day of week on a calendar. List the address, as well as the name of the activity place. A reminder ... remember that you are writing for people who do not know.

NEVER use a word in a news release that you would not use in everyday conversation. **NEVER** use a ten-cent word if you can think of a good five-cent word. Figures in your story copy? Always spell out numbers from one to ten ... then use numerals from 11 on up. Never begin a sentence with numerals. When you have finished the draft of your news release, go over it and cross out all the adjectives and unnecessary words like: "the"..."a"... "an"... etc. Check every point of your story for accuracy. Never guess on dates, places, or names.

Do not include telephone numbers in your article. News copy goes through many bands and the chance of error is great. Also, when you list a phone number for ticket sales, etc., editors realize you are using their columns for free advertising. They sell space and time for such a purpose! Never mention door prizes, raffles or lotteries in a news release. Newspapers are sent through the U. S. Mail and federal law forbids their use of such news.

TYPING A NEWS RELEASE

 News releases should always be typewritten and double or triple spaced on one side of the paper only. Use 8.5" x 11" plain white paper. Never use onionskin or tissue weight paper and never send carbon copies. Photocopies are acceptable. Type the full reference data in the upper left-hand comer of the first page. This can be single-spaced. List the name of the Post, Chapter or Department, your name, street and city address. Be sure to list your phone number. Leave ample margins, 1" – 1.5" on each side of the paper. Indent each paragraph at least five typewriter spaces. Always start typing your copy one-third of the way down the first page. The editor needs this space left open so he can write a head for your story.

If release must run more than one page, write **MORE** at bottom of each page except the last. Always end each page with complete sentence and paragraph. When release runs more than one page, type your Post, Chapter or Department at top of each succeeding page. Drop down one inch below this and continue your story. Type a few **# # #** or the word **"End"** under the final paragraph of the release. Never staple the pages of a news release. They must be separated in the newsroom and may be torn in the process.