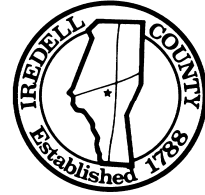


# IREDELL COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

## Public Information

March 5, 2010



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### Purpose:

To establish a consistent manner for the release of information to the public and the news media.

### Objective:

To provide a means for the public and news media to obtain accurate and reliable information concerning activities of Iredell County and its departments.

### Scope:

This guideline applies only to personnel under the authority of the Iredell County Manager.

### Policy:

Any and all official media/news releases concerning Iredell County, respective department activities or personnel, must be disseminated by a duly authorized and designated employee of Iredell County. In this situation, the Department Head or his/her designee will serve in the capacity of Public Information Officer (PIO). During the rare occasion when the Department Head or his/her designee cannot be contacted for a media release, the supervisor-in-charge shall assume this responsibility.

Regardless of who is serving as PIO, he/she shall make every effort to show Iredell County and his/her respective department in a positive manner. Media releases shall never bring a negative light or discredit Iredell County, its departments or agencies.

#### 1) Speaking to the Print and Broadcast Media:

- a. Department Directors, or designated departmental representatives, may handle routine requests from the media that are within their area of expertise. Other employees who may be asked questions should refer the reporter to the Department Director or designated representative.
- b. Department Directors may address questions from the media on sensitive issues relating to their area of expertise, including topics that may affect County policy and/or matters that may ultimately result in Board action. Department Directors are expected to inform and/or consult with the County Manager about such interaction as appropriate.
- c. If you are contacted directly by a news reporter, do not allow yourself to be pressured into releasing information that may be inaccurate or incomplete for the sake of meeting a deadline. Be honest and direct, but take the time to put together the facts and provide accurate information.

- d. Reports prepared by County staff for submission to the Board of County Commissioners shall not be shared with the media or the general public until the agenda packets have been delivered to the Board of Commissioners.

2) News Releases:

- a. News Releases shall be prepared and routed to the County Manager or his designee for final review before they are released to the media. Departments, boards, commissions, or committees may send out releases publicizing specific County events (date, time, place, etc.) or routine activities without submitting said releases for review. All other news releases shall be routed for comment to any department that would be affected by the release prior to final approval by the County Manager. This requirement will ensure that information is current and correct.
- b. Exception: Releases disseminated by the Office of Emergency Management immediately prior to, or during, a State of Emergency may be reported directly to the media by a designated department spokesperson with the approval of the County Manager or his designee. This shall also apply to releases issued by the Health Department immediately prior to, or during, a public health crisis and may be reported directly to the media by a designated department spokesperson with the approval of the Health Director or her designee. Any media release deemed to be of concern to the community should also be copied to the County Manager's Office
- c. County departments, boards, commissions, or committees shall use standard Iredell County news release stationery to distribute information to the media. News releases shall adhere to a specified County news release format (Attachment 2).
- d. News releases shall include the name, telephone number and department, board, commission or committee of the individual who has prepared the release.
- e. News releases containing controversial or sensitive materials and/or matters relating to public safety shall be distributed to the County Manager or his designee prior to release to the media.
- f. News Releases shall not contain information, which is confidential pursuant to provisions of State or Federal statutory or decisional law, or has been received by the County pursuant to a representation of confidentiality. Documents or information exempt from disclosure pursuant to provisions of Public Records laws shall not be contained in any news release without County Manager approval.

3) Meeting Notices, Advertisements, Public Hearing Notices, etc.:

- a. These items are considered routine and often are required by statute or rule in specific situations. It is within the Department Head's authority to handle these items as necessary. There is no need to copy County Administration on routine postings, announcements and advertisements.

4) General Public Information and Educational Information:

- a. This type of information is considered routine, and it is within the Department Head's authority to review, approve and delegate dissemination as appropriate.

5) Internet-Based Information Sources: ***Reserved***

## ATTACHMENT 1

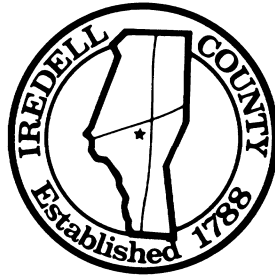
### **Pointers for Working with the Media**

- a. If at any time that you are unclear about whether information may be disclosed to the media, always err on the side of caution and do not disclose.
- b. Refrain from giving an “off the record” comment. Never consider any comment as “off the record.”
- c. If you throw mud you get dirty.
- d. Be open, honest and non-defensive.
- e. Bad news always travels faster than good news.
- f. Picture the situation, and put in some practice before you need it.
- g. Get your facts, or the facts will get you.
- h. Be vividly specific and compelling (i.e., interesting, accurate and timely).
- i. Remember that verbal snapshots penetrate the mind and linger (i.e., speak in word pictures).
- j. Perceptions color reality. If you look angry, resentful and evasive, even when you are telling the truth, people will usually trust their eyes first.
- k. Be brief.
- l. Make unlikely allies before you need them.
- m. Be plain and clear.
- n. Look to your critic’s positive intent, especially when they appear to have none (i.e., genuinely praise some specific action of the person who has criticized you).
- o. Be the first to say that you are wrong when you are.

*Note: Items c – o from Author Kare Anderson’s article “Turning Around a Public Crisis,” Public Management; October 2001*

ATTACHMENT 2

**Media Release Template**



Contact: Name, Title  
Tel. \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAIN TITLE  
Subtitle  
Date of Release

*Body of press release. Who, what, where, when, and how. Quotes when applicable.*

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If you would like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with \_\_\_\_\_, please call \_\_\_\_\_ at or email \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ .com