

# Effective Press Releases

*This Tech Tip was compiled using information from the Purdue Online Writing Lab, and the Cornell Local Roads Program*

## EFFECTIVE PRESS RELEASES

Press releases are great tools for getting a message out to the public about important information from your department. Press releases can be used for many different purposes such as announcing an award, preparing a community for an emergency, or informing the public about the details of a project. In order to effectively utilize press releases, there are several best practices that local departments should employ.



### Deciding **When** to Send a Press Release and **Who** to Send one to

First, make sure that the information you want to convey in a press release is useful, has value to the public, and has value to the audience of the news organization you send it to. Even a well-written press release will be ignored if local media outlets decide that the release will not be useful to their audience. Both the size and scope of the media outlet must be considered. For instance, a large regional metropolitan newspaper may have a wide reach in terms of subscribers and area served, but it is less likely that they will print a news release about a small local transportation project in a far-flung municipality. Furthermore, even a local publication that is focused on religious content or sports coverage will likely not be interested in transportation issues.

Ensure that press releases are not redundant. Oversaturating a news organization with frequent press releases on the same type of topic will not only lead a news organization to ignore the releases, but will cause them to build a habit of ignoring your organization entirely. Remember, news is meant to be relevant, interesting, or special for an audience.

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## Press Release Writer's Checklist: Who, What, When, Where, Why, & How

### Who

- Who is involved in the announcement? Who do you want to take action on the release? Who does your news affect or benefit?

### What

- What information are you trying to announce? Is the information new? If the information is technical, you may need graphics to help clearly convey your message. Always include all forms of possible contact information, such as facsimile and telephone numbers, websites, emails, postal addresses, and other services like bilingual support.

### When

- When is the information going to become useful, or when will the information become useless? Understanding time lines on information is important. If the information has a start date, it is necessary to have that date clearly identified on all press releases.

### Where

- For highway and public works, it is important to let folks know where any work is being done, especially if it may result in a delay or detour. Be clear and give both directional information and local landmarks. For instance, say the north side of town near the elementary school, not just the north side of town.

### Why

- Why is this important news? What will make the target audience care about our announcement?

### How

- One of the main uses of press releases is to explain how something occurred. Sometimes a press release is crafted in a way that places responsibility on a specific person or division of a company. Other times the release will be designed to show that the fault lies outside of a company, but the company making the release is doing all they can to improve the situation. Do not to use a press release for placing blame or pointing fingers. News and media outlets will not likely use your release if there is propaganda or self-serving details included in it.

### **Additional Resources**

Purdue Online Writing Lab - Writing Press Releases

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject\\_specific\\_writing/journalism\\_and\\_journalistic\\_writing/press\\_releases.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/journalism_and_journalistic_writing/press_releases.html)

Cornell Local Roads Program Sample Press Release

<https://cornell.box.com/s/q4mwzef6vf9wscnd5crw8kyigor275rd>



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# News Release

*For Immediate Release*

## **Cornell Local Roads Program awards Road Master Level III to #####, Superintendent of Highways, ##### Highway Department**

**Ithaca, NY** - The Cornell Local Roads Program’s Road Masters are individuals who strive to build strong foundations in technical and management skills in local highway communities across New York State. Individuals who achieve Levels III and IV are highly experienced professionals who have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to management, mentorship and training.

*##### has shown strong leadership and the desire to learn since I#####. ##### has grown and matured and ### earning of Road Master III illustrates ##### long-term commitment to the betterment of ##### Highway Department.*

*– David Orr, PE, Director, Cornell Local Roads Program*

In order to be recognized as Road Master Level III, ##### first earned Levels I and II by successfully completing ten Cornell Local Roads Program workshops. In addition to attending training workshops, ##### served as #####. ##### career in highway operations and management began #####

The Cornell Local Roads Program provides training, technical assistance and information to municipal officials and employees responsible for the maintenance, construction and management of local highways and bridges in New York State.

Details about the Road Master Program can be found on the Cornell Local Roads Program website: [www.clrp.cornell.edu](http://www.clrp.cornell.edu).

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