

Cover The Essentials of what your Post is doing or plans to do

Every AMVETS news release should include this information:

- The name, address, phone number and email address of your organization.
- The person to contact about the release, and their title or job description.
- A release date -- the date you would like your information to be published. Most of the time it is immediate release!
- A headline -- the title of the release. For example: **AMVETS Post 18 Makes a Difference!**

Create a 'Newsworthy' Message

Crafting a newsworthy message will make or break your release. Editors and reporters think in terms of the 'angle,' 'story hook' or 'news peg' of a story. They want to know what is timely and important about your message.

Identify a specific topic that will appeal to the media outlets you plan to contact. While this may seem obvious, many news releases go directly to the circular file because they are too general in purpose or fail to impress writers and editors as being of immediate interest to their audience. The media are always looking for the unusual, the abnormal and the unique.

Your message, summarized in 4 to 10 words, will be the headline of your release.

Here are some starting points for creating a newsworthy message:

- Anything that is abnormal, not normal
- Something unique
- The local aspects of a national story
- A seasonal activity or problem
- An unusual event
- A new solution to an old problem
- New information that challenges the conventional wisdom

Write Clearly, Be Concise

A one page release almost always works best. Many details can be covered in follow-up communications, and by referencing other sources of information (online, in a media kit, etc.).

Get to the point immediately. The first paragraph of the release should summarize the who, what, when, where and why of your message.

Be direct and write in plain language, avoiding jargon and hype. Write your release as if it was to be published verbatim in the media outlets you are targeting. But keep in mind that you are writing a pitch for media coverage rather than trying to tell the full story on a single page.

Get the Timing Right

Lead times vary greatly for different media outlets. Magazines may require several months between hearing your pitch and publishing a story, while newspapers usually need one to two weeks of lead time. Radio and television stations are generally focused on breaking news, which means you will need to act fast and, if possible, create a message relating to the hot topic of the day or week.

My observation is that Posts are not planning their media releases. For example did your AMVETS Post sit down at the beginning of the year and create a calendar of future events and then have the PRO Officer plan to do media releases about that event at least **three weeks ahead of the event? List what your planning to do for Veterans.**

Hospital Visits (who, what, when where) Let the public know what you are doing to serve Veterans!

Sending Cards to Veterans overseas for the holidays. Photos of the people mailing the cards or writing them out!

Holding a dance or other social activity

Holding a blood drive

Veterans Day events whereby the public is invited to attend!

Memorial Day events whereby the public is invited to attend!

Community Service events - perhaps holiday baskets of food for the needy

Officer swear in events and new member swear in events. You make it an EVENT when you photograph it and send to the media, and above all you make certain you are seen as a growing organization that still seeks new membership.

Be Tenacious

If your first efforts don't produce results, don't give up. It may take a number of attempts to establish that you and your organization are serious, interested and involved. It may also indicate that you need to follow-up by phone or email to discuss your story ideas.

Keep in mind that you are playing a competitive game, vying with a range of other story ideas for the attention of editors and reporters.

And remember that reporters will not come to you and offer you coverage. You must take your stories to them.

Use Media Alerts and Story Pitches

When the importance of an event speaks for itself, you can send a media alert instead of a press release. A media alert usually covers only the who, what, when and where of an event, and invites reporters to attend.

A story pitch is a very brief summary of a story idea for the media, which can be done by email, phone or in a letter. Be prepared to follow up immediately with a press release if your pitch gets a positive reception.
