

# FIFRA MEDIA INTERACTION

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## **MEDIA INTERACTION**

The press can be utilized very effectively to educate the public regarding the laws and regulations governing the use, sale, and distribution of pesticides. A good working relationship with the press should be fostered, and designated staff members should handle both technical questions and interviews with members of the press.

When called upon for interviews, first ask when and where the interview will occur. (Note: Always contact a supervisor before committing to an interview). To adequately prepare for the interview, find out in what type of surroundings the interview will be conducted. Find out if the interview will be taped or if it will be a live interview. If the interview is taped, there will be time to stop/pause and think of good, logical answers to questions. However, if the interview is live, there will not be as much time to think. Advanced preparation is critical.

When answering questions, be sure to answer only one question at a time. It is not uncommon for a reporter to ask a "two-part" question. When this occurs, take time and address each point individually. This allows for complete, concise answers to questions.

Communicate with the reporter as if everything will appear on the five o'clock news or the front page of the newspaper. With this point in mind, never ask a reporter to keep something "off the record." There are no guarantees that the reporter will grant that request. Speak as if everything that is said will appear in print. Interviewees must always remember to think before he/she speaks, and to do his/her homework. This is crucial!

Ask the reporter to repeat a question if it is unclear what is being asked, and provide the reporter with any fact sheets, literature, or other materials that may help provide a clearer understanding of the

subject. The interviewee may choose not to answer a question if he/she is not qualified to do so; however, the interviewee should tell the reporter that he/she is not qualified to answer the question. Finally, quickly correct any inaccurate statements so as not to convey the wrong message. The interviewee should not let the interviewer put false statements in his/her mouth.

As with all news stories, the press may take a keen interest in the daily operations of the Agency's investigations, and other "news-worthy" information about pesticides. Questions may arise regarding the identity of inspected parties, facts discovered, and possible enforcement actions of an ongoing investigation. This information is to be kept confidential until the investigation is complete. If critical information is divulged, the whole investigation may be jeopardized. Never release any information that may be considered to be enforcement sensitive.

After the interview is completed, it may be possible to obtain a copy of the interview for the inspection files or for training purposes. Dubbing services are available for this type of service, and they usually charge between \$25.00 and \$75.00 per episode, then discount each segment thereafter depending upon the amount of material ordered. Some news stations, depending on their relationship with the agencies involved, may be willing to reproduce this information free of charge. This information can be very useful for training staff on working with the media.

Working with the media can be a difficult process if there is a lack of preparation on the part of the interviewee. However, if the information provided above is considered, and if the interviewee does his/her homework, the interview will be a good learning experience. During an interview, try to maintain a positive attitude and make positive points; this will help instill confidence and keep the interview moving in a positive direction.