

DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE, VETERANS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
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Inter-Departmental Memorandum

April 2, 2014

TO: All Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management Employees

FROM: Brigadier General James D. Campbell, Commissioner/Adjutant General

SUBJECT: DVEM Policy 13-03, Public Communications Policy (Revised)

This memorandum of policy is effective immediately and remains in effect until renewed or revoked.

1. Department Overview.

The Maine Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management (DVEM) is composed of four bureaus. These bureaus have very different missions, and operate essentially autonomously, under the guidance of the Commissioner and his/her appointees.

The Commissioner, DVEM also serves as the Adjutant General of the State of Maine (TAG).

- a.** Bureau of Veterans Services (Bureau Director)
- b.** Military Bureau (Army, Chief of Staff and Air, Director of Support)
- c.** Maine Emergency Management Agency (Director)
- d.** Maine Military Authority (Executive Director)

For the purpose of this document “Commissioner” refers to the Commissioner/TAG. “Director” applies to the appointed authority of any of the four agencies.

Bureau-specific protocols are included with this policy.

Specific standards, formats or similar detailed guidance may be developed by the Department or a Bureau, and attached as an implementing document upon approval by the Communications Director to this policy at any time.

2. Purpose and Scope.

This policy applies to all staff members of the Maine Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management (DVEM) and is intended to guide their contact with the public and media in their roles as employees and representatives of DVEM.

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This policy has been created to ensure DVEM and its bureaus have guidance in place to provide the public and media with accurate and consistent information in an accessible, professionally-presented and timely manner. It also ensures the appropriate, coordinated use of Department-related materials, including its logo. This policy is part of DVEM's commitment to transparency and to creating and maintaining public understanding and support for its objectives and programs. DVEM has a fundamental responsibility to communicate consistently, clearly and effectively with all constituents. Working effectively with the public and media is critical to achieving this goal.

3. Policy.

The Commissioner's Office directs all Department communications efforts. The Commissioner's Office develops and disseminates all official agency announcements including, but not limited to:

Media releases, monthly highlights, educational columns and other documents/materials of interest to the public and regulated community; coordinates, prepares and promotes department staff public presentations and media conferences; responds to requests for public information; and manages all Department web content, including DVEM website and social media presence. The Director of Communications serves as the agency spokesperson.

4. Procedures.

4.1 Providing Public Access to Departmental Information and Proceedings

4.1.1 All official state business conducted electronically must be sent through the state's email system, to allow for retention under state archival statutes. Official state business may not be conducted through any other electronic means, including but not limited to unofficial email, text messaging and instant messaging.

4.1.2 Media representatives and members of the public have rights to observe the conduct of state and federal business. The Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) governs those rights, both regarding "public records" and "public proceedings."

4.1.3 DVEM conforms to the letter and spirit of the FOAA. All files, except those required or allowed by law to be kept confidential, are available for inspection during business hours, or may be supplied to the requestor in accordance with FOAA requirements.

4.1.4 Requestors may be charged for information, as provided for by the FOAA.

Staff follows State of Maine Freedom of Access Act Guidelines in responding to requests for information. The Commissioner, Bureau Director or the Chief Counsel assigned to DVEM may be consulted for guidance.

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4.2 Providing Information to the Public and Media in a Timely Manner

4.2.1 DVEM is committed to providing the highest level of transparency and customer service. A critical element of that commitment is to the extent practicable, to respond to all requests from members of the public or media in a timely manner. Responding to media inquiries is a high priority given their deadlines. To the extent possible, requests from the media will receive a response immediately upon receipt. If a response must be delayed (information must be researched, a spokesperson is not available, etc.) the reporter's deadline should be respected. If a request for information legitimately cannot be met before a reporter's deadline the Communications Director should be notified and the reporter should be informed of that fact.

4.3 Representing DVEM on Departmental Policy or Position

The Commissioner and Communications Director or other designee may be responsible for articulating Department and Bureau policy, positions and any public personnel information, including but not limited to budgetary matters, legislative and regulatory positions and staffing/structural decisions. Any media inquiries on these matters should be referred directly to the Director of Communications. A media policy, talking points, etc. will be developed in concert with the overall policy development.

4.4 Responding to Press Inquiries Regarding Specific Projects, Technical Issues (non-policy) or Agency Processes

4.4.1 Upon the approval of the Commissioner, Communications Director or Bureau Director, staff has the authority to respond to a reporter's inquiries regarding specific projects or technical issues within their professional purview. For those uncomfortable performing this task, a spokesperson will work with the subject matter expert to ensure information is accurately conveyed.

4.4.2 Staff members authorized to provide information in their areas of expertise will refer all other inquiries to the appropriate colleague, or the Director. Protocol for responding to media inquiries will be in concert DVEM policies. Staff members who are likely to engage with the media often will be encouraged or assigned to attend media relations training.

4.4.3 Staff members will abide by specific case-by-case guidance on discussing topics which are pending a Bureau or Department policy decision, but in general will offer no speculation on such topics. Responding staff should provide objective facts and never engage in speculation or opinion.

4.4.4 The Media Contact Form, attached, is used to document all calls or interviews with reporters. Copies of completed forms are to be sent electronically within the same business day to appropriate bureau management and to the Director of Communications. If the form is inaccessible (for example, the staff person is in the field),

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a phone call or email to the Director of Communications and appropriate bureau management is an acceptable alternative.

4.5 Initiating Media Contact

4.5.1 Media relations are the overall responsibility of the Office of the Commissioner. This is generally delegated to the Director of Communications, Bureau Directors and their designees. Suggestions for media releases, events and other public and media activities representing DVEM to the public or media are welcomed and should be brought directly to the Office of Communications before any action is pursued with as much advance notice as possible. If the suggestion is approved, the Director of Communications will delegate roles and responsibilities to move it forward, in consultation with the appropriate bureau management

4.5.2 All media releases and media-related activities (events/activities orchestrated for the press and public with the intent of heightening awareness) must be approved by the Director of Communications and the Commissioner. Media releases will be distributed through the Department/Bureau's normal channels, be displayed on the Bureau's and DVEM's website and distributed through social media channels.

4.6 Corrections/Letters to the Editor/Opinion Pieces

4.6.1 When the media seems to have erred or unfairly represented DVEM staff, their actions or Department policy positions, it is important to correct the misinformation and/or mischaracterization via a request for a correction, letter to the editor, etc. Staff should contact the Director of Communications who will determine and coordinate the appropriate response in partnership with staff to ensure the record is corrected.

4.7 Public Speaking/Presentation Engagements

4.7.1 DVEM staff is often requested to participate in a public speaking engagement, exhibition or policy-related forum (excluding mandated public meetings or hearings.) Upon request the staff member must inform the Director of Communications and the Bureau Director of the engagement, audience, objective, subject matter and resources required before accepting. The Director of Communications in partnership with the Bureau Director will review the request and advise on the response. Staff is not permitted to present on behalf of the Department unless approved through this process

4.7.2 Many staff members conduct programs where public appearances are routine. Such appearances relate directly to the staff members daily responsibilities and overall department or bureau objectives. Staff members are generally responsible with supervisors to arrange and document these appearances. If a request for an appearance is received that is

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outside the routine, a staff member should engage the supervisor or if necessary the Director, to determine how to proceed.

4.7.3 Electronic slide presentations and hand-outs used in public appearances should be reviewed by a supervisor or other designee before initial use. In some cases, a common “look and feel” for Department or Bureau materials may be developed and implemented. Bureau Directors are responsible for keeping the department message in mind while reviewing the material.

4.8 Department Education and Outreach Materials

4.8.1 Any outreach materials (including but not limited to letters, brochures, postcards, technical bulletins, issue profiles, print/broadcast/web advertisements or promotions, reports, etc.) must be approved in concept before development. The final product should then be developed in partnership with appropriate staff or partners, reviewed by a supervisor and receive final review and approval by the appropriate director. In some cases, approval may be required from the Commissioner or Communications Director. Materials related to a specific project may be developed with and approved by a supervisor.

4.9 Use of Department or Bureau Logo/Sponsorship

4.9.1 Any request by an outside or partner organization for use of the Department or Bureau logo should be reviewed with a supervisor, who may in turn confer with the Communications Director or Commissioner. If use of the logo is approved, the staff should ensure that the correct electronic logo is supplied to the requesting party. Staff should also review the resulting materials to ensure that the logo was used appropriately. All requests for use of a logo should be submitted in writing. Granting or denying permission should likewise be in writing. A subsequent (written) recalling of permission is then possible if needed.

4.9.2 Request for the Department or a Bureau to be listed as a sponsor for an event or organization, with or without monetary support, should likewise be reviewed with a supervisor, who will then consult with the Communications Director or Commissioner. As with logos, requests for sponsorships should be received and answered in writing.

4.9.3 Any use of a logo, or listing of a sponsorship, that has not been approved in writing, should be immediately addressed. The party using the logo or asserting sponsorship must be immediately informed that permission was not granted for such use, and requested to cease and desist.

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4.10 Social Media Usage

The Director of Communications is the Department's designated Social Media Supervisor and is the only DVEM employee authorized to engage in social media as a representative of the agency or to designate other Department staff to do so, as outlined in the OIT Social Media Policy, which can be found at <http://www.maine.gov/oit/policies/socialmediapolicyfinal.htm>.

Bureau-specific protocols:

- a. Bureau of Maine Veterans Services**
Media and public inquiries are referred to the Bureau Director who will work as needed with the Communications Director for messaging.
- b. Military Bureau**
Media and public inquiries are referred to the Public Affairs Officer who will work with the Communications Director for messaging.
- c. Maine Emergency Management Agency**
Media and public inquiries are referred to the Public Information Officer who will work with the Communications Director for messaging.

Crisis communications during an emergency event are conducted in accordance with the State of Maine Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, Annex D, Emergency Public Information, and its implementing documents and job aids.

- d. Maine Military Authority**
Media and public inquiries are referred to the Executive Director who will work with the Communications Director for messaging.

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Brigadier General James D. Campbell
Commissioner and The Adjutant General

**DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE, VETERANS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

MEDIA CONTACT FORM

Subject:

Date:

Media Contact:

Staff Contact:

Affiliation:

Telephone:

Desk Phone:

Information requested/provided:

Reason for inquiry/interview: (please mark with "X")

Background/ Gen' l information: _____

Follow-up from previous contact: _____

Article in print (date?): _____

Tape for broadcast (date?): _____

Is media follow-up expected? Why?

Is DEP follow-up appropriate? If so, by whom?

Additional comments:

If you referred the original contact to another person, program, agency, etc., please identify: