

Policy

Policy Title:	Sensitive Issues				
Policy Number:	DHS-120-003	Version:	1.0	Effective Date:	02/22/2002

DHS Chief Administrative Officer

02/22/2002

Approved By: (Authorized Signer Name)

Date Approved

Overview

Purpose/Rationale:

Guidelines for Public Communications on Sensitive Issues

Policy

It is DHS policy to ensure prompt, accurate and full reporting of legally disclosable information to Department employees, news media and the general public about issues that have or may have a negative impact on clients, stakeholders, or employees or reduce the public's confidence in the agency.

DHS is committed to communication that reflects its intent to be fully accountable to the public.

DHS will take a pro-active approach to public relations crises using disclosure whenever possible to ensure open communications with the news media and accountability to the public. The Communication Administrator or designee will advise the Department leadership when a preemptive approach is appropriate.

The Communications Office will be responsible for developing emergency communication strategies. The Department Director or designee will be responsible for final approval.

DHS will respond promptly, accurately and fully to requests for information. If requested information is not legally able to be disclosed under the Oregon Public Records Law or federal statute or if the Department of Justice advises against disclosure, DHS will cite the legal reference. If DHS is barred from responding by a court order, district attorney or the Oregon Department of Justice, we will say so and refer the reporter to that jurisdiction.

DHS will augment its communication with written materials (e.g..., news releases and fact sheets) whenever possible to ensure clarity.

DHS leadership in consultation with the Communication Administrator or designee will designate or approve one or more representatives to deliver a consistent message.

Only specifically authorized employees may speak on behalf of DHS. However, other employees will not be discouraged from exercising their right to speak on their own behalf. Non-authorized employees are expected to say they are not speaking on behalf of the agency and are encouraged to alert a supervisor. They should explain to reporters that the Department leaders accountable for the decision or action are speaking about the issue. Referring journalists to DHS Communication Office is encouraged. Anyone receiving media calls should notify the Communication Office.

DHS will issue printed materials only after approval for accuracy by the Department Director, an appropriate Assistant Director or designee.

DHS usually informs agency employees of information and developments immediately prior to or simultaneously with public release.

A representative of the Communication Office will be available by phone or pager to agency leadership and to news media representatives at all times.

DHS leadership will be kept informed about developments, including likely news media coverage. Although notification will typically be by e-mail, the telephone will be used if the leadership needs the information immediately or if the event is after normal business hours.

By agreement, the Communication Office, Department Director and/or others designated by the Department Director will provide information to the Office of the Governor, Oregon Department of Administrative Services, and other appropriate partners and stakeholders.

The Communication Office will maintain an up-to-date list of news media contacts (names, phone numbers, and fax numbers) at all times and programmed list of fax numbers for primary media outlets in the state.

In cooperation with the Director's Office, the Communication Office will maintain, update and circulate 24 hour contact information (phone number and pager numbers) for key DHS staff including Service Delivery Area Managers and Communication Office leadership.

Procedure(s) that apply:

[AS-010-003-01, Sensitive Issues Procedure](#)

Form(s) that apply:

None

Definition(s):

See Agency-wide Policy [Common Terms](#)

Reference(s):

None

Contact(s):

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Policy History:

- **Version 1.0:**
 - 06/22/2005 - Policy number changed from AS-010-003 to DHS-120-003
 - 02/22/2002 - Initial Release

Keywords:

(List keywords here that might be used by someone to search for this policy on the internet)