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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING RECLAMATION AND ENFORCEMENT

DIRECTIVES SYSTEM

Chapter:	Section:
12	01
Transmittal Number:	Date:
43	5/02/80

Subject: GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING, CLEARING AND ISSUING PRESS RELEASES

Approval: [signature] Title: Acting DIRECTOR, OSM

1. Purpose. This directive provides detailed guidance to all OSM employees involved in the preparation, clearance, and issuance of press releases.

2. Definitions None.

3. Policy/procedure.

a. Concept. The press release is the prime vehicle by which the Office of Surface Mining disseminates information about policy decisions, program changes, and major personnel announcements to the news media and to the general public. To be most effective, these releases must be prepared, cleared, and issued in the timeliest manner possible so that highlighted issues reach national attention while they are still fresh news items. Only a tightly coordinated effort by all parties involved in the clearance process will ensure that all press releases can be expedited and thus reach audiences in the most effective fashion. Steering this clearance procedure is the responsibility of the Office of Public Affairs (OSM).

b. Responsibilities.

(1) Director, Office of Public Affairs. The Office of Public Affairs prepares the release in close coordination with the program unit originating the news item. The surname of the Director, Office of Public Affairs, begins the clearance process. The public information specialist preparing the release determines the appropriate clearance steps, tracks progress of that clearance, oversees camera-ready preparation of the release, sets a release date in coordination with the Secretary's Office of Public Affairs, and is responsible finally for securing nationwide distribution of the release.

(2) Assistant Directors. Most press releases originate within a program unit, usually with key staff members providing the material. For most releases, the signature of the program source and that of the appropriate Assistant Director will be required. The Assistant Director's surname must appear on the draft release before it is taken to the Director.

(3) Director. The surname of the Director, or the Deputy in the absence of the Director, must appear on all draft press releases before they are sent to the Assistant Secretary, Energy and Minerals. In their absence, the acting Director will surname all press releases.

(4) Associate Solicitor, Division of Surface Mining. All press releases with legal significance -- including all rulemaking actions -- must be cleared through the Associate Solicitor, Division of Surface Mining, before they are sent to the Director. The public information specialist drafting the release is responsible for determining whether the draft is to be cleared through this office.

(5) Assistant Secretary, Energy and Minerals. All press releases emanating from the Office of Surface Mining must be cleared by the Assistant Secretary, Energy and Minerals, before going to the Secretary's Office of Public Affairs.

(6) Secretary's Office of Public Affairs. The Office of Public Affairs must clear all national bureau releases. This office is responsible also for securing printing and local media distribution for all national releases.

c. Procedures.

(1) Initiating the release. Any element within OSM that determines the need for a press release may contact the Office of Public Affairs. If Public Affairs determines that an action is newsworthy, it will then -- with material provided by the program office -- draft a release to be circulated for review (DM 470 DM 2.1). All Federal Register notices require either a press release or a waiver from OPA. (Departmental Manual Part 318 DM 2.3B).

(2) Clearing the release. To be most effective, the release must be clearly timed so that its issuance can attract maximum media attention, thus the draft release must be circuited expeditiously through a carefully determined clearance route. The Office of Public Affairs will mark a clearance timetable on each individual routing sheet so that all parties involved in clearance have a set time limit on holding the release. Most draft releases would follow one of the below courses:

average national release

Office of Public Affairs
Source
Assistant Director, Originating Unit
Director
Assistant Secretary, Energy and Minerals
Secretary's Office of Public Affairs

press release with legal significance

Office of Public Affairs
Source
Assistant Director, Originating Unit
Associate Solicitor, Division of Surface Mining
Director
Assistant Secretary, Energy and Minerals
Secretary's Office of Public Affairs

(3) Format. The draft will be prepared by the Office of Public Affairs on yellow bond paper, double spaced, with the surname stamp placed in the upper right hand corner of the first page. The draft then will be assembled with a standard press release form -- giving supplemental information -- and a routing sheet to be filled in by the public information specialist originating the release. After all the surnames are secured, the release will return to OPA. The release date is determined by the Secretary's Office in coordination with OPA. It is then telefaxed to the regional offices where it also will be released -- often with a local angle to enhance the regional news value. Once a release is printed, it will be hand-distributed by the Department to all major media outlets in Washington, D. C., and also mailed to a select list of media, public and private organizations, and individual citizens nationwide.

(4) Editing. Any changes to the release will be made in either pen or pencil on the yellow draft. Each person making revisions should use the same writing instrument when surnaming so that it will be apparent who made the changes. When extensive revisions are suggested, the draft should be returned to the Office of Public Affairs where a public information specialist will incorporate the revisions into a new draft, and then continue clearance.

(5) Federal Register releases. All Federal Register notices must be reviewed by OPA where a determination will be made on the national news value of its contents. The press release then accompanies the notice through clearance so that both may be signed similtaneously. After the Director or the Assistant Secretary, Energy and Minerals, signs the final document, the release is sent to the Department's Office of Public Affairs and the register notice returns to its originating office. It is the responsibility of the originating office to notify OPA when Federal Register notices are sent to Information and Records Management for final clearance. Information and Records Management then will inform OPA, in advance, of the date that notice will appear in the Federal Register.

(6) Regional Releases. Certain non-policy issues -- such as AML emergency funding or smaller grants under $100,000 -- are only significant regionally, but due to complex paperwork involved in their execution, require a limited clearance at national headquarters. Below is how regional releases are cleared at the national level:

regional release

Director, Office of Public Affairs
Source
Assistant Director, Originating Unit

The release then would return to the appropriate regional headquarters for release and distribution.

4. Reporting Requirements. None

5. References:

a. DOI Departmental Manual Part 470 DM 2.1, and Part 318 DM 2.3B.

6. Effect on other documents. None.

7. Effective Date. Upon issuance.

8. Contact: Office of Public Affairs (202) 343-4953.