

SOUTH PLACER MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT POLICIES

Policy Name:	2100 – COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA GUIDELINES		
Approval Authority:	SPMUD BOARD OF DIRECTORS	Adopted:	
Resolution No.	15-23	Revised:	

PURPOSE

This policy establishes guidelines for communication with the media and the District’s commitment to provide transparent, timely information to the media.

POLICY STATEMENT

Section 1: General

The District General Manager will be responsible for the implementation of this policy. The General Manager shall approve all press releases, media contact, and media content. The General Manager is the primary District spokesperson and point of contact for all media inquiries unless this task is designated to another District employee or outside media consultant. All requests for Board media contact shall be addressed to the Board President who is designated as the media spokesperson for the Board.

Section 2: Press Releases

Press Releases shall be coordinated through the Administrative Services Manager and subject to the approval of the General Manager. Press releases shall be transmitted to all local media outlets whose circulation covers the District boundaries. Media quotes should be arranged through either the General Manager or the Board President, unless either of these spokespersons have designated another District employee or Director to speak on behalf of the District.

Section 3: Interview Requests

If possible, interview requests should be approved by the General Manager. Also, if possible, a list of potential interview questions should be requested prior to the time of the interview to help prepare for the interview. References should be made to explicitly stated Board decisions, the District principles, strategic goals or prior District history on the subject of the interview. Every attempt should be made to incorporate any District-approved messaging or communications plan on the interview subject.

It is the District’s goal to respond to any media inquiries the same day they are received, but at least to return phone calls within 24 hours. The District shall also endeavor to respond to media inquiries within a reasonable time, and provide transparent and timely information to the media under the circumstances. To the extent necessary, responses to media requests shall be reviewed by District legal counsel to review employee privacy issues or other matters protected by law from disclosure prior to dissemination to the media.

Section 4: Board of Directors

As contained in Policy 4050 – Guidelines for the Member of the Board of Directors, in their interactions with the public, press or other entities, Board members should recognize the same limitation and the inability of any Board member to speak for the Board or for other Board members except to repeat explicitly stated Board decisions.

Board members shall at all times endeavor to express their individual opinions in a responsible manner, without causing harm to the District, or to other Board members and staff.

Each member of the Board is expected to support the legitimacy and authority of the decisions of the Board concerning any matter, irrespective of the member’s personal position.

Board members retain the right to criticize the decisions of the District, but in doing so should make it clear that it is their opinion, and not the opinion of the Board or other Board members, and so long as it complies with the limitations set forth in these policies. Board members are encouraged to notify the General Manager in advance when they plan to speak publicly in opposition to the District’s decisions and policies.

Section 5: Message and Communication Plan

All media contacts should be taken as opportunities to state Board decisions, the District principles, Strategic goals and prior District history and should conform to whatever message and communication plan that the District may have on any particular subject.

Section 6: Crisis Response Protocol

In the event of a crisis or emergency, the General Manager or their designee shall immediately contact and apprise the Board of Directors of the situation. This contact should be by telephone. In cases where the Board member is not available, the General Manager or their designee may leave a voice message, but shall next attempt to use email and then finally a text message to the Director’s mobile phone.

Prior to contacting the media, the District will proactively develop the framework for a Q&A and press statement, including:

- Acknowledgement of the crisis
- Details about the occurrence
- Photos or videos, if available
- How the District found out
- Who was alerted, when, and how?
- Specific actions taken in response
- Real or potential impacts
- Steps taken to prevent future occurrence
- Contact information for approved, accessible points of contact

This same information will be uploaded as soon as practical to the Districts website. When possible, the General Manager shall work with District Counsel during the crisis response process.

Section 7: Website

The District shall maintain a website containing information that provides service and information to the District's customers, including but not limited to, business services, Board decisions and approvals, major reports and studies, District principles, strategic goals, prior District history and emergency information as needed. Emphasis should be on the message and communication planning regarding protection of the environment, prevention and elimination of sanitary sewer blockages and overflows.

Section 8: Social Media

The District does not currently maintain any social media accounts.

Section 9: Personal social media

Employees and Board members should not comment on behalf of SPMUD through personal social networking channels. Formal statements should follow the same process as traditional interview requests, public speaking opportunities and Board interactions.