



# **Tennessee National Guard Unit Public Affairs Handbook**

# Tennessee National Guard Unit Public Affairs Handbook

## CHAPTER 1

Welcome to the world of Public Affairs. Actually, if you're no stranger to the National Guard, you've probably been doing "public affairs" for some time, although you may not have called it that.

### **So, why a Unit Public Affairs handbook?**

Good question. To stand the best chance of establishing and maintaining the good will and public acceptance that is essential for your unit to be combat ready and succeed, you have to exercise an element of public affairs. Call it what you will, it still comes down to doing public affairs work, whether it's meeting with a newspaper or television reporter, or publishing a unit newsletter so your members and their families will know what is going on. And that is why one of the first things we suggest is that you read and become familiar with this handbook. Only then will you be able to fit the suggestions into specific public affairs goals for your unit.

This handbook is designed to simplify your public affairs efforts. It provides you a ready reference for dealing with public affairs issues. The handbook will not make you a public affairs officer, but it can help make your public affairs work easier and more effective. This effort should leave you with more time to concentrate on other important tasks to ensure your unit is at its best.

You really can't avoid public affairs. It's all around you and in your dealings with the members of your unit and the community. Public affairs doesn't just happen when you're talking with a reporter. It is an all-encompassing effort which has its principal goal of ensuring your unit is well accepted and supported in the community. Public affairs also means your members, their families and their civilian employers are equally well informed about National Guard programs and requirements which affect them.

### **ABOUT THE HANDBOOK**

The handbook has been written with as much common language as possible. For example, the chapter titled "How to Deal With Reporters," would be called "Media Relations" in the public affairs career field. "Publishing a Unit Newsletter" would be called "Command Information" in the Army Guard and "Internal Information" in the Air Guard public affairs offices.

The handbook is a starting point - a tool to help you break the ground of the often confusing and mysterious field of public affairs. Get to know the full-time public affairs officer in your State Headquarters, and establish a relationship with other public affairs unit members in your state. Do this for both your Army and Air National Guard colleagues; public affairs is very much a joint effort. Also, there are many fine books on public affairs in local libraries and from bookstores.

## **GETTING STARTED**

One of the first things a commander should do is appoint a Unit Public Affairs Representative, or UPAR, as they're often called. As you consider a person to appoint, here are some suggestions to guide your choice:

- Your UPAR should be someone who is familiar with your unit and has proven him or herself as dependable. You need someone you can rely on to work independently, without a great deal of supervision.
- The UPAR should be able to communicate well... that is, they should be able to talk clearly and effectively to unit members, or reporters, if needed, although we're not suggesting the UPAR replace the commander as spokesperson for your unit. That's a task that properly remains with the leadership of a unit.
- The UPAR must be well organized. Time is precious for you and the UPAR. There's isn't time to repeat instructions or closely supervise someone's work.
- Whoever you appoint will need at least three important things from you, the commander, and your unit: time, material and support.

**Time** - It takes a while to get established as a UPAR, and it takes time to become efficient as a UPAR. Commanders need to allow for a period of adjustment while the UPAR learns the job. And to be fair to the person's career, consider appointing them to the UPAR assignment on orders so their performance reports can record the person's extra effort and skill. It also takes time for a UPAR to plan and carry out tasks. Time is especially important for a major project such as an open house or family day.

**Materials** - The need for materials (supplies) will vary. But if you're planning to have a UPAR publish a unit newsletter, obviously that person will need access to a personal computer with appropriate software and a copying machine.

**Support** - This may be the most important element that a commander can provide a UPAR. Ensure the members of your staff know your UPAR and are aware that you support the UPAR's efforts. UPARs should attend appropriate staff meetings and be included in the planning process for unit events. A good UPAR is very much in the know regarding a unit's schedule. Post the UPAR's name prominently on your bulletin board and encourage unit members to talk with the UPAR about possible newsworthy events.

If you have questions about using this handbook, contact the full-time public affairs officer at your State Headquarters. Suggestions on improving the handbook may be sent to:

**Joint Public Affairs Office  
Tennessee National Guard  
Houston Barracks, P.O. Box 41502  
3041 Sidco Drive  
Nashville, TN 37204-1502  
615-313-0633**

Good luck with your unit's public affairs program!

## **RECOMMENDED UPAR DUTIES**

- Meet with unit commander and establish a unit public affairs plan.
- Establish liaison with local news media - newspapers, television, cable television and radio.
- Make news releases to local media on unit personnel and activities.
- Work with your recruiters to publicize local Guard enlistments.
- Tell the National Guard story.
- Invite news reporters to visit your armory or local training sites.
- Recommend items of interest/need to the commander for presentation to troops during weekend training.
- Keep an inventory of command information items available from the Departments of the Army and Air Force, and from your State Headquarters.
- Maintain a bulletin board with command information items.
- Assist in planning a unit open house or family day.
- Publicize unit participation in community projects or activities.
- With permission and proper presentation, serve as a spokesperson for your unit commander.
- Serve as the public affairs point of contact for your unit.
- Keep your full-time state public affairs officer advised on public affairs matters in your unit.
- Determine your resources and ask for assistance from your chain of command.
- Provide reference material for speeches or presentations
- Keep your commander advised of your activities.

## Chapter 2

In most circumstances, a UPAR will be seeking out a reporter as part of a unit's campaign to tell its story to the public. You will be the first to contact local journalists with news of a promotion, or the arrival of new equipment, or the selection of your unit for an innovative training program. On the other hand, when you have the least amount of time to talk with journalists or when there's been an accident or incident, journalists will call you.

Working effectively with reporters -- whether the news is good or bad -- requires preparation and practice. This chapter provides information on how to improve your media relations skills. First, a few words of caution. If a serious incident takes place involving members of your unit, or something happens in your area involving National Guard property or equipment, work with your chain of command to ensure that the full-time public affairs office in your State Headquarters is notified immediately. If an accident involves serious injury, death or significant loss of property, the moment you finish calling for help from the police and/or fire departments, begin the process of notifying proper public affairs officials. This is one of the most valuable things a UPAR can do. If you've done your homework and made advance contact with your full-time public affairs office, these procedures should be part of every unit's Standard Operating Procedures.

By notifying the state public affairs office immediately, you engage the horsepower of higher headquarters. Avoid the temptation to wade into a potentially complicated public affairs issue alone, the risks are too great. Rely on the full-time public affairs office to take over the public affairs mission and stand by to help.

With that warning in mind, here's a brief analysis of the relationship that the National Guard has with the media along with recommendations on how to make the most of all situations.

**Fact** - Reporters have a job to do. Their stories and pictures serve an important function in our democratic society. Remember from history that the first item in our nation's Bill of Rights deals with freedom of the press. It is a cherished freedom that missions of others in the world do not enjoy.

**Fact** - Reporters have bosses to serve and often work in a fiercely competitive marketplace. To be successful, they must be accurate and fast. Their eagerness to work quickly doesn't always mesh with the military's careful way of doing its business, but a smart UPAR can learn how to serve the media's requirements for speed and accuracy while at the same time protecting the best interests of the National Guard.

**Fact** - Reporters are eager to learn about new things, experience new situations and meet interesting people. All of these factors contribute to their mission of informing the public. Harness this natural curiosity to your unit's advantage. Even during a crisis or when something has happened that doesn't put your unit in a positive light, a savvy UPAR works hard to ensure the story is accurate, fast and fair.

When you are dealing with reporters it is important to keep in mind the spirit of a Department of Defense document called the "Principles of Information." Briefly, these published principles require that everyone in the military must maintain open, honest and fair dealings with civilian journalists. Information may not be withheld from a reporter who asks for it merely because the information may be embarrassing to the military.

## **HERE ARE MORE GUIDELINES:**

**Security** - Under no circumstances may classified information be released to a civilian journalist. Do not render any comments on matters which are, or may be classified. If you know that information being sought is classified, indicate just that and decline to comment further, even in an indirect manner. If you're not certain whether something is classified, find out before you respond to the reporter. Then, act accordingly. Use common sense, but don't use "it's classified" as a shield, either. A good UPAR should be notified in advance by proper military authorities if an operation or equipment contains classified information.

**Accuracy** - Along with speed, this is an equally important factor to any good reporter. Know what you are talking about. Use notes. Provide fact sheets or information papers to reporters, especially if the subject is complicated. While you want to be prompt with your response, take adequate time to be certain your information is accurate. Don't guess at an answer or be bullied by a reporter into responding with information that isn't correct. And if you make a mistake, contact the reporter quickly and set the record straight. Likewise, if a reporter had made a blunder in a story, contact them and politely explain the error.

**Privacy** - Be cautious when giving out information about members of your unit. A federal law called the Privacy Act is designed to protect the privacy of everyone and limits the types of information which you may provide about an individual. Check with your full-time state public affairs office for details of how the Privacy Act is handled in your state. The rules are grounded in common sense and are not that difficult to follow.

**Freedom of Information** - Along with the Privacy Act, another federal law called the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is designed to keep government papers, documents and records open to the public. As a UPAR it is very unlikely you will ever get involved in FOIA actions. But understand that the law is designed to prevent government agencies, including the military, from withholding its documents in response to a legitimate request from a reporter or other individual, even if the information is potentially embarrassing.

**Regulations and Policies** - Military regulations and policies, including those by the National Guard and your state, also may have an impact on what types of information can be released to reporters and by whom. As a UPAR, it is unlikely that you will be involved in many of these situations. But it is useful to be aware there are regulations regarding the release of information regarding an accident, for instance. Notification of next of kin and discussions as to the cause of an accident are matters covered by military regulations. Policies, on the other hand, often are developed in response to local situations and should be discussed with your state's full-time public affairs office.

**Propriety** - Often, this involves common sense. It's not proper, for example, to discuss the gruesome details of an accident with a reporter. To help you know when and what to release, a UPAR should consult with higher headquarters or your state public affairs office. This might add delay to your ability to respond quickly, but it ensures accuracy and compliance with the rules that govern public affairs actions.

**Spokesperson** - Who speaks for a unit when a reporter wants to interview someone? The commander. A UPAR is likely to be very much involved in the process by providing support, and on occasion may have to pinch-hit, but it is the commander who has the responsibility of being the spokesperson for a National Guard unit. This doesn't mean that a reporter can never speak to someone else in a unit. A

situation might require that a subject matter expert regarding a piece of equipment talk with journalists, but the commander remains responsible.

**Taking Questions** - Sometimes, a UPAR can't respond to a reporter's questions. Time is short, the question too delicate or complicated, or you're not sure about the authority you have to discuss a certain situation. When that happens, the common sense answer is to courteously respond, "I don't have any information for you. Let me check and get back to you." This answer won't make the reporter happy and they're not likely to give up on the topic, but it provides you the opportunity to forward their question to your higher headquarters or the state public affairs office.

**Public Affairs Guidance** - Even if you're dealing with reporters on what you would consider a "good news" story, the development of well prepared and coordinated public affairs guidance can be your most valuable tool. Public affairs guidance, or "PAG" as it is sometimes called, is your plan for action or plan for defense.

The best way to start preparation of guidance is to pretend you are a reporter. What are the questions you'd like to ask, especially the really tough ones that get to the heart of an issue? Once you have your list of questions, work with subject matter experts in your organization to develop the answers. Make sure your answers are accurate; within the boundaries of laws, regulations and policies; and have been coordinated with your higher headquarters. Rehearse giving your answers with someone and make sure you don't forget to make your points.

The effort required to develop good public affairs guidance can be considerable, but it often can be the single most effective tool you can have in talking with reporters.

## **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

On occasion, a unit commander or UPAR may find themselves responding to a reporter's questions that deal with accidents, criminal matters or political activity. Obviously, you will want to either turn the questions to your higher headquarters or the full-time public affairs office. In those situations where help isn't immediately available, or you are waiting for assistance, here are suggestions to aid your efforts:

### **ACCIDENTS**

When accidents happen, especially if there are major injuries or a death, you can count on being contacted by reporters. This will happen very quickly. Your first knowledge of an accident might come from a reporter who has learned of the incident from independent sources and is calling you for a reaction.

At the same time that proper military authorities are getting involved, the UPAR should swing into action by first gathering accurate information about the accident. This information becomes the basis of a statement that you can prepare, or that you can forward to your full-time public affairs office so they can take the lead and begin responding to reporters. The statement is likely to be very brief; it will acknowledge obvious details and explain that military authorities are involved in the investigation of what happened. Often, you may have to work in cooperation with local civilian law enforcement authorities or rescue personnel.

## **Two important things to remember:**

1. Names of dead or injured victims must not be released until the victims' next of kin have been properly notified. Before releasing any names, check with your higher headquarters to make certain that relatives have been properly notified. If you are uncertain, use this statement: "The names of the victims are being withheld pending notification of next of kin."
2. Do not speculate about the cause of an accident. An investigation will determine the cause. You can't deny the obvious. If an aircraft has crashed and burned, say that a crash and fire have taken place, but don't speculate as to the reasons why.

## **CRIMINAL MATTERS**

Reporters may call your unit for information about a person who may be suspected of, or charged with committing a crime. The event may or may not involve the military or the person's affiliation with the National Guard. That won't stop a reporter from contacting you.

When this occurs, you need to work quickly and carefully to alert your higher headquarters and the full-time state public affairs office. These people have the responsibility to prepare any media statements. Just as with an accident statement, you may be asked to help. And once a statement has been approved, you may be permitted to provide it to reporters.

### **Remember this:**

The rights of a person accused of a criminal offense must be carefully guarded. This applies whether you are issuing a statement or responding to a reporter's questions concerning allegations of criminal activity. You must not provide any information that would interfere with an accused person getting a fair trial:

If you have received permission to release information about a criminal act, do not release any information except verified facts.

Do not comment on an accused person's character or behavior before, during or after a start of an investigation or arrest.

Do not comment on evidence.

Do not offer any opinion about the guilt of the accused.

## **POLITICAL ACTIVITY**

The realm of politics at any level - local, state or national - offers another public affairs challenge to commanders and UPARs.

### **Remember this:**

As a member of the National Guard you have the right to vote and are encouraged to do so. You may encourage others to vote, but when you are on duty, you cannot participate in partisan political activity.

Material supporting or commenting directly or indirectly on a political party or candidate must not appear in your unit newsletter.

As a member of the National Guard, when you are on duty, do not solicit votes for a candidate or issue; do not make or solicit political contributions; do not influence or interfere with an election.

Check with your Judge Advocate General office if you are not certain about a matter dealing with possible political bias.

## Chapter 3

Understanding the news media -- how they work -- what they look for -- what they consider news -- how best to convince journalists that your unit is newsworthy -- is a skill that can take years to develop.

When you are the commander of a National Guard unit or a newly appointed UPAR, you never have enough time. This chapter is designed to provide you with some insight into news media and suggestions on how best to present your story to journalists who are just as busy as you.

This chapter won't make you an instantly successful news writer. You will find sample news releases at the end of the chapter that you can modify to fit your unit's needs. That's a start. From there the success of the program depends on how hard a commander and UPAR work at developing and maintaining relationships with journalists in your area.

Some words of caution. As you begin to develop your unit's public affairs program, do not assume you can create something the news media will accept as news. All too often, a flimsy or contrived news event backfires, and reporters then really have a news story on how they were manipulated. A newsworthy event should stand on its own. Don't be timid about presenting finished stories and story ideas to reporters, but make certain your offering is sincere and complete.

Here are some observations about the news media and how you can work with journalists to best tell the story of your unit:

- Reporters are professionals. They value the work they do as a service to the community. They judge what is "news," that is their responsibility. Reporters may be willing to listen to your suggestions and read your submitted stories, but they reserve the right on what to publish or broadcast. Be prepared to hear the answer "no." Don't take their response personally. Many factors are involved in determining what is newsworthy. Ask for their advice on meeting their needs and keep trying!
- The news business is intensely competitive. Don't consider this a problem or obstacle. Take advantage of the competitive marketplace by offering the best you can and allow talented reporters to make the most of your story. Because the marketplace is competitive, many other news sources are working just as hard as you to place their story ideas with reporters. The news space in any newspaper or air time on a broadcast station is limited. Don't get pushed out of the way simply because you were late with information or not responsive to a journalist's request. Think of it like combat - shoot first, shoot often and shoot straight!
- News organizations have their own bureaucracies, especially in large metropolitan areas. Reporters have first line supervisors who report to managers, who report to owners. Most news organizations are profit-making corporations that must serve their readers, listeners and viewers, and advertisers in order to stay in business. Be aware that reporters you deal with in the field could be very junior in rank, and they do not have complete control over finished products that you see in print or view on television. As you grow more confident in your public affairs efforts, get to know the right people in a news organization to better ensure your stories and story ideas get fair consideration by the news bureaucracy.
- Time is critical to any news organization. This factor cannot be emphasized too strongly. Miss a deadline and you miss your chance!

## **FIND THE BEST PATH**

When you set out to tell your unit's story to the local media, it is important to find what medium works best to tell a certain type of story. Especially at the local level, hometown weekly or small daily newspapers work best to tell your stories about new recruits, community-based programs or changes of command. Likewise, hometown radio stations, small market television stations and cable television are productive places to present stories about local Guard unit activities.

### **NEWSPAPERS**

Newspapers, especially community weeklies, small daily papers and free-distribution "shoppers" often are the most favorable place to publish National Guard stories and photos. Don't overlook major daily newspapers if one serves your community, but be realistic in expending effort.

**Key individuals** - Smaller papers often have just one or two reporters who cover all news events. Get to know these journalists and work directly with them. At larger daily papers, often one or more reporters will be assigned to cover a military beat. As with their colleagues at a smaller paper, work with these individuals and, when appropriate, their first line supervisors.

**What works best** - Announcements about new recruits, troops graduating from military schools, promotions, changes of command, new equipment, construction projects and community relations events sponsored by National Guard units, especially those that benefit youth. Realistically, there are no limits to subject matter for newspapers. In cooperation with your full-time state public affairs office, consider inviting a reporter from newspapers to accompany your unit to annual training or on an overseas deployment. Check with your full-time public affairs officer before issuing invitations and be prepared to assist with coordination.

### **RADIO**

Radio is fast-paced and short-lived. Remember that radio works best at making announcement-type stories about your unit or an individual. Because radio reporters are limited to a listener's sense of hearing, they work hard at making their stories sound energetic. Reporters also like to vary the kinds of voices by interviewing newsmakers, sometimes "live," but most often with an "actuality" that is recorded on the scene or over the telephone and then edited for broadcast. Although radio station news departments tend to be very small and have limited resources to cover events from the scene, don't overlook inviting radio reporters to visit your training locations to record the voices and sounds of National Guard activities.

**Talk Radio** - Talk radio has developed large and faithful audiences across the country. Seek out the local talk or call-in shows that suit your needs. Choose the program carefully to ensure you will be reaching a worthwhile audience, as some talk show followers come from very narrow interest groups. Don't waste your effort. The person who acts as a spokesperson for your unit must be very knowledgeable about the National Guard and they must be able to keep their cool. Always work in coordination with your full-time state public affairs office before you make commitments to appear on a talk radio program.

**Key Individuals** - A station's news director runs the news operation of a radio station. With the exception of major city stations or ones that feature an all-news format, most radio stations have very small news operations, sometimes the news director is the entire news department. In many states, stations will link together in cooperative networks to share statewide news stories. This can be another outlet for mass distribution of National Guard stories via radio. Get to know how the networks operate in your area to see how they could assist your efforts.

**What Works Best** - Be prepared to work fast with radio stations. Use the telephone, fax machine or e-mail to deliver your messages as quickly as possible. With very rare exception, anything sent to a radio station in the postal mail is wasted effort. In cooperation with your full-time state public affairs office, consider inviting a reporter from radio stations to accompany your unit to annual training or on an overseas deployment. Check with your full-time public affairs officer before issuing invitations and be prepared to assist with coordination. Final thought: Some radio stations, especially those in the Public Broadcasting format, are capable of producing unique and rather lengthy news stories. Get to know the reporters from these stations and work to provide them with story ideas that match their format. They reach rather small but important audiences.

## **TELEVISION**

Television has come to dominate much of the news business with its immediacy and ability to show the emotion of sounds and color pictures. Like the newspaper industry, television markets come in many sizes. You are most likely to have success getting a local National Guard story told on a station from a smaller market than from a major metropolitan area. And like other media, you can count on reporters from nearly any size television station showing up without an invitation when your National Guard unit is involved in a breaking news story - favorable news (responding to a natural disaster) or bad (when there's trouble with personnel, equipment or facilities).

**Key Individuals** - A station's news director runs the news department. Reporters cover general assignments or might be assigned to the military beat if the station is large enough. Front line supervisors at the news room often are called producers rather than editors. It's good to develop a working relationship with reporters and especially with producers, since they often control the assignments for field reporters.

**What Works Best** - Television is a visual medium that thrives on colorful, fast-paced action. Be prepared to provide access to reporters and their camera crews (that's usually a minimum of three people plus gear) with front line access to the action if you want to better ensure your story will make it on the air. And remember that like radio, television is a medium of immediacy. You will do best when a television crew has the opportunity to get its interviews and video quickly, so they can return to their station to finish editing their stories. While a commander has the responsibility of being the spokesperson for a unit and should be involved in meeting and working with journalists, consider carefully who is recommended to be interviewed on camera. Doing this well takes confidence and practice. If there is time, ask your full-time public affairs office for assistance. In cooperation with your full-time state public affairs office, consider inviting a reporter from television stations to accompany your unit to annual training or on an overseas deployment. Check with your full-time public affairs officer before issuing invitations and be prepared to assist with coordination.

## **WEEKEND REALITIES**

Most hometown National Guard training takes place on weekends when news organizations are thinly staffed. Plan ahead by making your contacts during regular business hours so that a newspaper or broadcast station's key individuals can consider your story ideas and make proper assignments to their weekend crews. Ironically, while weekend staffs can be small and inexperienced, especially at small-market stations, these same stations often have the most air time to fill with what could be your story!

## **STORY IDEAS**

Here's a list of events that could take place in your unit. Evaluate where best to offer the story in your community by considering the "what works best" suggestions found in this chapter. Some ideas could be strong enough to offer to all media, others will require tailoring to meet the needs of print or broadcast:

- State emergency activation
- Unusual training programs
- Change to your unit's equipment, force structure or mission
- Visits by well-known personalities
- Public service projects involving the community
- Charitable work by individuals (human interest)
- Drug demand reduction programs
- Programs that benefit the community's youth or elderly
- An alert for possible federal activation
- Major awards and honors, and individual achievements
- Unit open house
- Interesting new equipment or aircraft
- Overseas deployments for training
- Cost saving solutions
- Events that have an impact on the local environment
- The local "spin" on national military policies, especially when they involve the personnel arena (e.g., homosexual policy, women in combat, Gulf War illness)

## **HINTS FOR THE COMMANDER AND UPAR WHEN YOU ARE BEING INTERVIEWED**

You can successfully communicate with the public and have more positive control of an interview situation with:

- Knowledge of your subject
- Honesty and candor
- Positive attitude
- Use of concise, simple language
- Familiarity with the media

## **POINTS TO REMEMBER**

- You represent the National Guard and the larger active-duty military establishment when you deal with journalists. Always keep your personal views and opinions out of the interview.
- Begin with the attitude that a reporter represents the public, and the public has a right to know about the military.
- Avoid technical language, jargon and military acronyms. Be aware that very few civilian journalists have military experience.
- Put your conclusion into the front of your interview remarks, then expand on the topic.
- Speak in short, effective sentences. Long answers are seldom used in broadcast or print stories. The more you talk, the more chance for saying something that can be misunderstood.
- Stop talking when you've made your points.
- Stay "on the record." Don't say anything outside the interview you wouldn't want to see or hear in the news. Don't agree to respond "on background" or go "off the record" with a reporter.

- Keep your cool when under verbal fire.
- Don't automatically accept a reporter's facts or figures as correct.
- Don't answer hypothetical questions. Generally, these questions begin with "what if?" situations proposed by a reporter.
- If you don't know the answer, say so. Offer to find the answer.
- Never use the phrase "no comment." Explain why you can't answer the question. (Remember matters of security, accuracy, military policy and propriety.)
- Most reporters are generalists. You are the expert on military matters. Do not be timid if you have an opportunity to educate a reporter about military issues.
- Don't try to "snow" a reporter. Be polite, professional and sincere.
- Arrive on time for news media appointments. Talk to reporters about the subject points that are key to the story or that you would like to discuss.
- Prepare for interviews. Know the talking points that you want to make, and remember why you were asked for the interview.
- Establish ground rules and subject matter to be discussed prior to the start of a formal interview.
- Do your homework. Practice talking about the subject with someone who will ask you questions, especially the difficult questions. Even in your specialty, a brush-up is wise.
- Provide reporters with fact sheets that explain the technical specifications of equipment or the organization of your unit. Very few reporters have military experience, so they appreciate fact sheets that help them with nomenclature of equipment and correct spellings.
- Call on your full-time state public affairs office for assistance.

## **PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESOURCES TO HELP YOU PUBLICIZE YOUR UNIT**

Your state National Guard's full-time public affairs officer and staff should be able to assist you with the following:

- Assistance to units large and small
- Full-time coordination for support from your state's Army public affairs detachment or higher headquarters public affairs assets
- Coordination of a public affairs support plan for your unit's annual training
- Conduct training for your Unit Public Affairs Representative (UPAR)
- Publish a statewide newspaper or magazine and World Wide Web site
- Speech file references
- On-site public affairs support during an emergency

### **An Army National Guard Public Affairs Detachment can provide:**

- Support to the state's overall public affairs program
- Support to National Guard units in your state
- News release support to newspapers, television and radio stations
- Still photo support. Increasingly, this is being done with digital cameras
- Videotape capability
- On-site assistance during emergencies
- Support for production of a statewide National Guard newspaper, magazine or World Wide Web site

## **STATEWIDE NEWS COVERAGE**

There are a number of activities in your state each year that result in what might be described as expected or predictable coverage by the news media. Remember, even a topic that generates routine interest requires effort on your part to ensure your story is presented in an interesting, accurate and timely manner. Here's a list of story topics that should be on your "must do" list:

- Annual training for your unit, especially if it involves a deployment to an unusual place or involves activities with a significant local impact
- Changes of command
- Changes to the force structure or mission of your unit
- Officer and NCO academy graduations
- Presentation of awards and decorations to your unit or individual members
- Participation in competitions such as marksmanship contests, marathon races, the biathlon or other events
- Involvement in youth programs
- Involvement in drug demand reduction programs
- Construction or significant remodeling/repair of military facilities in your area
- Changes to recruiting/retention benefits
- Changes to significant pieces of equipment in your unit
- Events in your unit that have an impact on the local environment
- Events in your unit that have an impact on the local economy

## **HINTS FOR RADIO OR TELEVISION INTERVIEWS**

The following suggestions are aimed at broadcast interview appointments. Most of the recommendations also apply to print interview situations, especially when a newspaper photographer will be present:

- Know as much as possible about the subject. Don't guess at an answer or respond to hypothetical questions. If you don't know an answer, say so.
- Be aware of your speed in talking - not too fast, not too slow. Regional accents and dialect add interest to broadcast stories, so don't let this be a barrier to someone being interviewed. At the same time, the interviewee must be able to communicate clearly and effectively.
- Gestures and mannerisms can be very distracting. Be careful what you do with your hands, legs and facial gestures.
- Wear the proper uniform and wear it correctly. If you're in a studio, Class A is likely to be appropriate. If you're in the field, match what the troops are wearing. Be alert that proper safety gear and other uniform items are worn correctly, especially when in a field environment. At the same time, don't interrupt an interview if you notice an unfastened button or something that the civilian audience won't notice as being out of regulation. Use common sense when it comes to uniforms and equipment.
- Rehearse what you want to say with someone who asks you questions, especially the tough ones you might expect.
- Be on time for interview appointments. If you're the guest on a call-in show or other live interview, the station is counting on you to be on their program.

## **MEDIA LISTS**

An important tool for a UPAR or unit commander is a listing of news media organizations in the local, or, in some cases, the regional area. This list permits quick and reliable contact with newspapers and broadcast stations in your area. If you are careful when you establish the list and keep it maintained, the list can be especially helpful during an emergency when you might have the need to contact a specific department within a news organization very quickly.

Make copies of the fill-in-the blank forms included in this handbook, or make up your own computer database. Maintain the list at your National Guard unit office and keep a copy at your home and civilian workplace. A news event involving your National Guard unit can happen at any time, you may not have the opportunity to travel to your unit office before you must react.

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**NEWSPAPERS / MAGAZINES**

<b>Name of Publication</b>	
<b>Mailing Address</b>	
<b>E-mail Address</b>	
<b>Contact's Name/Title</b>	
<b>Telephone</b>	
<b>Deadline Day and Time</b>	
<b>FAX Number</b>	
<b>Other Information</b>	

**TELEVISION OR RADIO STATIONS**

<b>Call letters</b>	
<b>Network Affiliation</b>	
<b>Mailing Address</b>	
<b>Street Address</b>	
<b>E-mail Address</b>	
<b>Telephone</b>	
<b>Fax Number</b>	
<b>News Director</b>	
<b>News Director Phone</b>	
<b>Weekend Phone</b>	
<b>Night Phone</b>	
<b>Public Service Director</b>	
<b>Phone</b>	
<b>Weekday Deadline</b>	
<b>Weekend Deadline</b>	

## Chapter 4

The following sample news releases are provided to assist you in preparing unit-level releases. All releases should be typewritten and doubled-spaced on your unit's letterhead. Never send a fill-in-the-blanks news release that has been hand-written. Include your name and unit phone number on the release, or the name and phone number of a knowledgeable person who can assist a journalist with any follow-up questions. Keep a copy of every release in your unit files. If the news has impact at higher command levels or is especially unique, send a copy to your state Public Affairs Officer.

To be sure you've gotten everything correct, have the person you're writing the story about complete and sign a News Release Questionnaire (example included with this Handbook) or use DD Form 2266 (available on Forms Flow software) and retain it in your file with a copy of the story. Be very careful and sensitive when including information about a person's family members, especially when dealing with people who might be divorced, separated, widowed or single parents. To be safe, don't do a news story on someone who refuses to complete the Questionnaire or DD Form 2266.

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### NEWS RELEASE QUESTIONNAIRE

To be completed by everyone who agrees to the use of their name in a news release prepared by your unit. Retain this signed form with your file copy of the news release.

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Unit</b>	
<b>MOS or AFSC</b> Described in words, not letters and numbers	
<b>Hometown</b>	
<b>Civilian Occupation/ Employer</b> (If appropriate)	
<b>Spouse/family</b> (If appropriate)	
<b>Parents and their hometown</b> (If appropriate)	
<b>High School and Colleges</b> attended, including year graduated and field of study	
<b>Remarks</b>	
<b>STATEMENT</b> I authorize this information to be used and published in an Army/Air National Guard news release. _____ Signature and Date	

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**SAMPLE NEWS RELEASES**

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**NEW ENLISTMENT**

**UNIT LETTERHEAD**

**Date**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**For Additional Information, Contact:**

**Telephone:**

\_\_\_\_\_ (name) of \_\_\_\_\_ (hometown) was sworn in  
\_\_\_\_\_ (day/date) as the newest member of the \_\_\_\_\_ (state)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Army/Air) National Guard's \_\_\_\_\_ (unit).

\_\_\_\_\_ (last name) enlisted under a program which pays \_\_\_\_\_ (describe benefits, such as  
G.I. Bill). He/she is enrolled at/works at \_\_\_\_\_ (college or civilian employment, and is studying  
\_\_\_\_\_ (college major or career field).

The oath of enlistment was administered by \_\_\_\_\_ (name of officer). Attending the ceremony  
were \_\_\_\_\_ (list any significant guests, such as family members and their relationship to the new  
soldier/airman).

\_\_\_\_\_ (last name) will begin \_\_\_\_\_ (describe training) active-duty training at \_\_\_\_\_  
(duty station) and will be assigned to \_\_\_\_\_ (describe person's National Guard duties) when  
he/she returns.

---

**PROMOTION**

**UNIT LETTERHEAD**

**Date**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**For Additional Information, Contact:**

**Telephone:**

\_\_\_\_\_ (name) of \_\_\_\_\_ (hometown) has been promoted to the rank of \_\_\_\_\_

(describe new rank in words such as staff sergeant, not E-6) in \_\_\_\_\_ (Guard unit).

\_\_\_\_\_ (last name) has been a member of the \_\_\_\_\_ (state) Army/Air National Guard for \_\_\_\_\_

years. The promotion brings a new position, that of \_\_\_\_\_ (job title), with responsibilities for

\_\_\_\_\_ (explain new duties).

In civilian life, \_\_\_\_\_ (last name) works at \_\_\_\_\_ (employer) as a \_\_\_\_\_ (job title).

---

**AWARD PRESENTATION**

**UNIT LETTERHEAD**

**Date**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**For Additional Information, Contact:**

**Telephone:**

\_\_\_\_\_ (rank and name) of \_\_\_\_\_ (hometown), a member of \_\_\_\_\_ (National Guard unit), received the \_\_\_\_\_ (certificate or medal) \_\_\_\_\_ (day/date). The honor was presented to \_\_\_\_\_ (last name) for \_\_\_\_\_ (reason for presentation).

In civilian life, \_\_\_\_\_ (last name) is employed by \_\_\_\_\_ (employer) \_\_\_\_\_ as a \_\_\_\_\_ (give title/duties). He/she has been a member of the \_\_\_\_\_ (state) Army/Air National Guard for \_\_\_\_\_ (years), and currently is assigned to \_\_\_\_\_ (unit) as a \_\_\_\_\_ (describe military duties).

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**HONOR GRADUATE**

**UNIT LETTERHEAD**

**Date**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**For Additional Information, Contact:**

**Telephone:**

\_\_\_\_\_ (rank and name) was honored recently as an honor graduate of \_\_\_\_\_ (name of course) at the \_\_\_\_\_ (name of military school), \_\_\_\_\_ (location).

\_\_\_\_\_ (last name), a member of \_\_\_\_\_ (unit), \_\_\_\_\_ (unit location), attended the course for \_\_\_\_\_ (time length). Following his/her return to the unit, he/she will be assigned to the \_\_\_\_\_ (section) as a \_\_\_\_\_ (job title).

In civilian life, \_\_\_\_\_ (last name) is employed by \_\_\_\_\_ (employer) as a \_\_\_\_\_ (describe duties). He/she has been a member of the \_\_\_\_\_ (state) Army/Air National Guard for \_\_\_\_\_ (years).

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**CHANGE OF COMMAND**

**UNIT LETTERHEAD**

**Date**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**For Additional Information, Contact:**

**Telephone:**

\_\_\_\_\_ (rank and name) is the new commander of \_\_\_\_\_ (Guard unit), \_\_\_\_\_

(location).

\_\_\_\_\_ (name) received command of the unit \_\_\_\_\_ (day/date) from \_\_\_\_\_ (rank and

name), who had commanded the unit since \_\_\_\_\_ (month/year).

\_\_\_\_\_ (last name) commented after accepting command of the \_\_\_\_\_ (size of the unit) member

National Guard unit that, " \_\_\_\_\_ (insert quote or appropriate comment from commander).

In civilian life, \_\_\_\_\_ (last name) is employed by \_\_\_\_\_ (employer) as a \_\_\_\_\_

(title/duties). He/she has been a member of the \_\_\_\_\_ (state) Army/Air National Guard for \_\_\_\_\_

(years).

\_\_\_\_\_ (last name of departing commander), the departing commander, is being assigned to

\_\_\_\_\_ (describe new assignment, retirement or separation from service).

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**RETIREMENT**

**UNIT LETTERHEAD**

**Date**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**For Additional Information, Contact:**

**Telephone:**

\_\_\_\_\_ (rank and name) of \_\_\_\_\_ (hometown) retired \_\_\_\_\_ (date) from the \_\_\_\_\_

(state) Army/Air National Guard with \_\_\_\_\_ (years) years military service.

His/her last assignment, which he/she held since \_\_\_\_\_ (month/year), was with \_\_\_\_\_ (unit)

located in \_\_\_\_\_ (city), where he/she was \_\_\_\_\_ (unit assignment).

Previous assignments included \_\_\_\_\_ (highlight just the primary assignments and dates held).

\_\_\_\_\_ (last name) began his/her military career in \_\_\_\_\_ (year), when he/she \_\_\_\_\_

(enlisted/was commissioned) \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ (branch of service). He/she served \_\_\_\_\_ (list wartime assignments, if any) and was awarded \_\_\_\_\_ (list top awards).

\_\_\_\_\_ (last name) future plans include \_\_\_\_\_ (briefly describe plans). (If appropriate,

briefly describe the servicemember's spouse and family and their connections to the National Guard, if any).

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## **OPEN HOUSE**

### **UNIT LETTERHEAD**

**Date**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**For Additional Information, Contact:**

**Telephone:**

The \_\_\_\_\_ (state) Army/Air National Guard's Armory/Base at \_\_\_\_\_ (street address and city) will conduct a free public open house \_\_\_\_\_ (date) from \_\_\_\_\_ (hours of open house). \_\_\_\_\_ (rank and name), commander of the \_\_\_\_\_ (unit), invites everyone to attend.

Displays and demonstrations of equipment used by the National Guard, and information about a wide variety of programs sponsored by the \_\_\_\_\_ (state) National Guard, will be available.

(In the next paragraphs, include a quote or comment from the command or other appropriate person and explain highlights of what will be on display, guest speakers, demonstrations, refreshments, etc. Include information about parking and access to the installation).

---

## ANNUAL TRAINING

### UNIT LETTERHEAD

**Date**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**For Additional Information, Contact:**

**Telephone:**

Annual training for the \_\_\_\_\_ (unit), \_\_\_\_\_ (unit's location), will be conducted at

\_\_\_\_\_ (site of training) from \_\_\_\_\_ (start date) until \_\_\_\_\_ (end date).

This year, unit members will concentrate on \_\_\_\_\_ (describe highlights of training), according to

\_\_\_\_\_ (unit commander).

(Use additional paragraphs to describe other interesting facets of the training. If appropriate, include safety information about convoy movements or other events that could have an impact on the public.

Example, a tactical exercise in the training area that might make unusual noise. A similar news release can be written at the conclusion of training to describe the unit's experiences, awards received, etc.).

## Chapter 5

Providing local newspapers with good photographs can go a long way toward getting your story into print. When you lack either the time or the manpower to receive photo support from a higher headquarters, your UPAR or other designated person can step in and fill the bill. Thanks to the technology of point-and-shoot 35 mm cameras and the availability of many commercial photo developing outlets, much of the mystery has been removed from taking good photos. And in a growing number of places, digital still picture photography is revolutionizing the process. But easy-to-use cameras still require some care and practice.

**First**, a good photograph must meet certain technical standards. To be used in a newspaper or magazine, a photo must be in sharp focus - no exceptions. The photo should have a good range of contrasts, that means it should not look washed out or muddy. And since most photos are printed in color, the colors should be rich and vivid.

**Second**, a photo must have eye appeal. It should grab your attention and the attention of a reporter or editor who makes the decision on whether it is published or not. From the smallest weekly newspaper to a big city daily, all papers want to publish photographs with visual stopping power. Don't settle for second best.

**Third**, a photo must serve the purpose of illustrating the story you are telling. If your story is about a change of command, a good head and shoulders picture of a new commander illustrates the story, probably much better than a group picture of the unit's senior leadership, or the customary "passing the flag" picture. If your unit has received new equipment, take photos of the equipment in action, not in a parking lot or resting on the armory floor.

Any subject - a person, equipment, or training area - can be photographed in an unlimited number of ways. Each picture will give a different impression of the subject. Close-ups can be very powerful images. Taking a photo at an unusual time or day or during stormy weather can add additional impact to a photograph and increase your chances for having it published. Armed with a dependable camera and plenty of film, a good photographer needs to develop his or her ability to observe the action and decide how best to tell a story with one or more photographs. Be willing to experiment, be willing to practice, and ask for help from professionals.

Here are more tips:

- For low-cost training, cut a 4"x5" rectangle in the middle of a piece of cardboard that is the size of a sheet of stationery. Look through the opening with one eye to "see" what your finished photo will look like. By shifting the frame back and forth, vertical and horizontal, you can quickly visualize what kind of scene your camera shots will capture.
- Look for informal or unrehearsed scenes. Posed pictures look "posed" and don't have the stopping power that will catch an editor's eye. Since you can't always take pictures without others noticing, spend a few moments with your subjects to put them at ease as much as possible.
- Beware of things in the background of your photos. Is a tree branch or howitzer barrel "growing" out of the back of the head of your subject? And be aware that it is hard to see troops in camouflaged uniforms when they are posed against trees and shrubs. That's the point of military camouflage, but there are times when you must avoid it with news photography. Shoot from a lower angle and make the sky your background, or search for other viewpoints that reduce the chance your subjects will blend into the background too much.

- Take a few moments for a "safety check" of your subjects. Are they in a proper military uniform? Are they working with equipment or weapons in an approved and safe manner? If you must, put things in order before you take the picture. It is unreasonable to make every scene appear inspection-ready, but be sensible.
- Don't crowd a photograph with people or subjects. A flexible limit of four or five people to a shot should be the maximum. And in your finished prints, each person's face should at least be the size of a dime for it to reproduce well in a newspaper.
- Avoid grip-and-grin photos for newspapers. They're just fine for scrapbooks, but most editors avoid these photos at all costs. If a person is receiving an award for a job well done, the best photo is a picture of the soldier or airman on the job.
- Fill the viewfinder of your camera with the subject you want published in the paper. This means getting as close to the action as is safely possible. When you move in close, take the picture. Then move in closer and take one more.
- Watch the horizon when you are shooting indoors. Unless you are trying to dramatize the action, the horizon should be as level as it is in nature. If the picture isn't straight, it marks you as a beginner and reduces your chances a photo will be published.
- Speed is important. Your photos and articles should be delivered to a newspaper, together, as quickly as possible. The news value of a story and pictures is very perishable. This often means meeting deadlines in hours, not days, and certainly not from one month's training assembly to another. If you can, use e-mail to deliver your products.
- Avoid the temptation to flood a newspaper office with prints. Don't be skimpy, but send only your very strongest photos. If it is necessary, especially with pictures of equipment or events that a non-military journalist might not understand, include some background information that explains why certain photos are more important than others, but let the editor decide which ones to print.
- Every photograph must have a caption. Take extra care to ensure that names are spelled correctly and that equipment or the action in the photo is adequately described.

# Chapter 6

In previous chapters, we've covered how to work with the news media and how to publicize your unit to people who are not part of it. However, there is another audience of people who must be reached if you are to have an informed and capable unit. These include the members themselves, and their families. In many instances they are not only the most difficult to reach with your message, but the most important.

Part of the difficulty in contacting or keeping this audience informed is recognizing the importance of an effective, local-level command internal information program which uses a variety of methods to reach both the members of your unit, and their families.

In this chapter we will cover:

- What materials are available to help you in this effort
- Ways that you can make the best use of this material
- Considerations in setting up and maintaining an effective unit information program
- Ways to publish a unit newsletter to help keep the members of your unit and their families informed about programs that affect them

## **WHY FAMILY MEMBERS?**

Increasingly, being an active, consistent participant in the National Guard is requiring a significant amount of each member's time and energy. The days of the stereotype that the Guard is a "club" are long gone. Our nation and states place too much reliance on the capabilities of the National Guard to permit that luxury. Longer, more intense training periods and the increased tempo of training have resulted in increased demands on each member, and on their families.

Critical to maintaining support from a Guard member's family is to ensure they understand what is going on in your unit and how that is important to the welfare of your state and the defense of our nation. The key word is "understand," and in order for family members to continue to understand and support their spouses' participation in the Guard, they have to be continually informed of the reasons why the Guard is important and why the contribution of their spouse and family is necessary.

## **WHAT IS AVAILABLE TO HELP?**

The list of materials is nearly endless. However, an effective local command information program requires imagination and a clear idea of the subject you need to address, and the amount of effort you can contribute.

**On Guard** - The National Guard Bureau publishes a monthly newspaper, "On Guard," that is filled with news and feature material about the National Guard and its worldwide operations. Multiple copies are mailed to each unit for use by members and their families. Ensure that this publication receives maximum exposure in your unit.

**World Wide Web Sites** - The National Guard Bureau and the National Guard of each state maintain World Wide Web sites on the Internet. One of the best ways to start your search is to look up the following World Wide Web sites:

[www.tnmilitary.org](http://www.tnmilitary.org)            The official website of the Tennessee National Guard

<http://www.ngb.army.mil/>    The official World Wide Web site of the National Guard Bureau

[www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil)        The official World Wide Web site of the Department of Defense

**Army and Air Force Public Affairs** - The public affairs offices of the active Army and Air Force publish a wide variety of command information products. You receive most of them at your unit already, especially publications such as *Soldiers* and *Airman* magazines. As with our own *On Guard* newspaper, and the VolstateGuard Online, ensure that these publications are widely distributed and read.

**Audiovisual** - Modern technology and the Internet are fast replacing much of what once was called audiovisual materials. The movie projector has long ago been replaced by the VCR, and the Army and Air Force continue to produce a wide variety of materials on videotape that can be used to inform unit members and their families. Many units and states, too, produce excellent videotape programs.

#### **CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE COMMANDER**

**Time** - Your challenge is balancing your need for providing timely, needed information against all other training requirements. It takes innovation and effort to win at this game.

**Facilities** - Some things are appropriate for presentation in a troop formation or large classroom, others are not. Finding the right combination and then fitting them into your schedule is another piece of the puzzle.

**Personnel** - Hopefully, your UPAR can be a significant help in setting up and assisting your command/internal information efforts. In some states, there is a list of experts available to help on complicated projects. A member of the legal staff, for instance, may be best suited to present information on the need for writing your will.

These may seem to be common sense suggestions, and that's just what they are. Much of a successful information program requires common sense. But these suggestions also reflect the fact that a good command/internal information program requires planning and action.

#### **UNIT NEWSLETTER:**

One of the best ways of reaching your members and their families is with a regular unit newsletter. Notice, we've used the word newsletter instead of newspaper. There's a difference.

It's likely the public affairs unit or section at your State Headquarters already publishes some kind of a newspaper, magazine and, increasingly, maintaining a World Wide Web site. Your newsletter is a close-to-home publication and should be much more informal. An energetic UPAR with decent computer skills and a photocopying machine are all you need.

## **WHAT TO INCLUDE:**

At a minimum, the unit newsletter should include:

- Comments from the commander on what he/she wants to emphasize for the upcoming training periods.
- Latest promotions and awards given to members.
- Dining hall menus and other "nice to know" information that keeps everyone in the loop.
- Family news or news related to your family such as information about the PX or BX, commissary, pay, benefits, up-coming events.
- Important telephone numbers and schedules.

## **PRODUCTION TIPS:**

Most word processing software contains templates for newsletters. Try one of these for starters and modify it for your needs. The real key is the dedication of the UPAR and the commander to ensuring the newsletter includes good information, is produced consistently, and is clearly backed by the commander.

Don't think you have to be elaborate. Look at the newsletters of schools, clubs and religious groups for examples.

Be careful with what your newsletter says. Avoid the temptation to be too cute or clever. Funny often can mean embarrassing, and that can mean trouble.

Keep your higher headquarters informed about your newsletter. Include them on your distribution list.

Think ahead -- that is, plan ahead. If your unit holds an awards ceremony each quarter, plan your newsletter to coincide with the ceremony (but don't forget to send news releases to the local newspaper, too).

Be consistent. Members and their families will come to depend on your publication for important information.

Ask for help when you need it. Seek assistance from your state public affairs officer or public affairs unit.

Keep it simple!

## **CHAPTER 7**

Up to now, this handbook has addressed dealing with the news media and your unit personnel and their families. However, these are not the only audiences that have an interest in National Guard activities. They are not the only persons who would be interested in or important to your unit's existence and acceptance in the community. It's important to consider the entire community as your audience, and that includes groups such as civic leaders, employers, other government agencies and citizens in general.

A unit with an effective public affairs program includes these groups as often as possible. Two time-tested methods for reaching these audiences include the operation of a speaker's bureau and the production of open houses at your armory, base or training site.

### **SPEAKER'S BUREAU**

Operating a speaker's bureau within your unit provides an opportunity for your most effective and knowledgeable members to make presentations to local audiences. Some places to promote the availability of National Guard speakers include: Service clubs, Chambers of Commerce, religious groups, community groups, youth organizations, schools, colleges and veterans groups. Check with your higher headquarters and the full-time state public affairs office for speech-writing ideas along with audio-visual aids such as videotapes and printed material.

### **OPEN HOUSE**

An open house at your unit is an excellent way to tell the National Guard story directly to citizens or a select group of individuals you invite. If your unit does not have the capacity to host a public open house, consider conducting a more limited program for the employers of your members. For any open house event, the key to success is adequate and thorough planning. Allow several month's lead time for planning, and check with your higher headquarters for guidance on regulations and policies that govern what you can do and what funds can be spent to host your guests. Since planning for, setting up and conducting an open house will compete for precious training time, be certain that everyone understands what duty status will cover their participation. You will find that preparation for an open house requires a generous amount of volunteer effort, so you will have to plan accordingly.

Work with local news media to spread the word about a public open house, and don't forget to issue reporters special invitations to attend the event. When you're hosting a boss night for employers, work with your unit members to ensure invitations are issued to appropriate people within that person's civilian workplace chain of command.

Contact your headquarters and full-time public affairs office for additional assistance with audio-visual materials and other presentation items that could be used during an open house.