

## How to Write and Format a Press Release for E-mail Distribution

The majority of electronic press releases sent are 400 words of text organized into no more than five, short two to three sentence paragraphs.

Information such as photographs and other supporting documents usually included in a printed media kit may be published on our website where reporters may access them easily at their convenience. Contact the Webmaster (Bettie McElroy – [bettie@mcelroyassoc.com](mailto:bettie@mcelroyassoc.com)) if you need anything uploaded to the website for retrieval by the media.

Sending photographs and supplemental information files through e-mail attachments is not acceptable when contacting a reporter.

### Information to Include in a Press Release

- A compelling e-mail subject header and headline.
- A first paragraph that covers the five W's: **who, what, where, when and why**.
- Electronic contact information including an e-mail address for the press contact and Web site address of the church. Be sure that in addition to e-mail contact information, a phone number for the press contact is listed.
- A short paragraph at the end of the release containing background information about the church. We have provided that paragraph for you in our sample press release.

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### How to Format a Release

1. The first line of the e-mail message should read: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE in all caps. This lets the reporter know the news is authorized for publication on the date they receive it.
2. Allow one spacer line then write a headline using a combination of lower case and capital letters. Keep your headline to ten words or less. Do not write the headline in all capital letters because it is harder to read using e-mail software.
3. Allow another empty line for spacing, then begin the text of the release as we show with the city and state followed by a dash. All releases must include a date since reporters do not always use releases immediately.
4. Include press contact information below the text of the news release. A reporter reading your release should be able to make a decision about your story.

5. Finally, close the document with the characters -30- or ### which are style conventions that let the report know they have reached the end of the story.

## **REMINDERS**

Don't trust your word processing program to catch errors in grammar and spelling. Have at least one other person read the release before sending it to a reporter or news agency. Additionally, remember that press releases are sent by e-mail and not everyone uses the same software. For that reason, do not use HTML tags, bold type or color text which may not transmit consistently across all computer platforms.

## **When to Send Your News**

### **Daily Newspapers**

Business and general assignment reporters working for newspapers and online dailies turn around stories within 24 and 48 hours. However, feature writers are working on stories weeks in advance of publication date. Press Releases about special events or with holiday tie-ins should be sent a minimum of three weeks in advance so the reporter has ample time to research and write the story. The same is true for promoting online webcasts and events. Three weeks is often needed to obtain coverage in Internet newsletters and online calendars.

### **Monthly Magazines**

Monthly publications usually close editorial content two months in advance of the issue date. It is not unusual for writers to be deciding on story content for a December issue in September. Stories with a holiday theme should be sent to allow the reporter ample time for research and coverage.

### **Radio and Television**

We have omitted information about submitting information to these media outlet, since they don't have the time to promote any specific events in this large metropolitan area.

For all media, it's always best to find each company's deadlines and policies regarding event announcements and news releases.