ASRC PIO (Public Information Officer) STANDARDS

A. *Qualifications:*

To become a Public Information Officer (PIO), the applicant must:

1. Meet all standards established for Field Team Leader;
2. Have participated in six[1] searches as an FTL, or two searches as an assistant PIO and meet all other criteria;
3. Be proposed for PIO status by the Group Training Officer at a group business meeting and receive a simple majority of the vote;
4. Successfully pass the standard ASRC PIO written test; and
5. Be at least 18 years old.

A current FTL certification or higher is mandatory, completion of MSO/PSO is highly encouraged.

B. *Recertification*

PIOs must meet annual continuing education requirements and maintain skill proficiency by participating in a minimum of two missions per year as either lead PIO or assistant PIO.[2]

C. *Equipment Requirements*

PIOs must meet the minimal Personal Equipment requirements as specified in the ASRC Operations Manual. The official reference for this list is the Operations Manual. As of this writing the list includes the following:

1. Appropriate clothes and footgear for both fair and foul weather;
2. Water container of one- to two- liter capacity;
3. Day pack (knapsack will be sufficient);
4. Five large, heavy-duty plastic trash bags;
5. Food for 48 hours;
6. Headlamp (or flashlight) and second light source;
7. Lighter, matches and candle, or equivalent WATERPROOF fire source;
8. Knife;
9. Compass;
10. Personal First Aid Kit;
11. WATERPROOF pen/pencil and paper;
12. Whistle; and
13. Two pair plastic or vinyl examination gloves.

In addition to the minimal personal equipment the PIO is required to carry these additional items;

1. Notebook for logging events
2. Forms
   a. Interview forms
   b. Info sheet with local, regional, and national media contacts

3. Background sheet or brochure on ASRC
4. Tape recorder
5. Clean uniform and hat
6. Tooth brush or breath mints (Garlic pizza and similar search food and interviews don't mix)
7. Camera
8. Flagging Tape *(for roping off areas)*
9. Magic Markers *(For making signs and directional notices to media)*
10. Cell phone or access to ASRC group phones
    (So that you have a contact number for the press and authorities to contact you)

D. *Knowledge and Performance Expectations*

Public Information Officers are expected to meet all of the requirements of the Knowledge and Performance Expectations of the ASRC FTL Standards. The items listed below are additional items specific to PIO duties.

1. PIO Duties and Responsibilities;
   a. List the four phases of Emergency Management
      (mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery)
   b. List the four groups you are responsible for providing information for.
      (Public, media, ASRC, response agencies)
   c. Define the difference between reliable and unreliable sources of information and give examples.
   d. Define the difference between Proactive and Reactive responses.
   e. List the 5-W's of public information *(who, what, when, where, why and how)*

2. Liabilities and Laws
   a. What is the First Amendment and describe how it affects public information and the press *(Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of speech or of the press)*
   b. What are shield laws? *(press does not have to reveal its sources)*
   c. Define the Freedom of Information Act and why it affects a PIO
   d. List exemptions to the Freedom of Information Act.
      (1) Classified material
      (2) National defense material
      (3) Internal personnel rules and policies
      (4) Trade secrets
      (5) Inter-agency communications
      (6) Personnel files
      (7) Medical files
      (8) Financial institutions
      (9) Oil well locations
      (10) Law enforcement materials
   e. Privacy
      (1) List groups whose privacy are our concern
          i. Subjects/Families
          ii. ASRC members
          iii. Other agencies
      (2) List areas where the violation of the right to privacy can be a legal cause of action.

                i.   Right to privacy in family matters
               ii.   Intrusion into the "physical solitude" of an individual
              iii.   Publication of private facts
              iv.   False light privacy (portrayal of an individual in a different light than they actually are)

f. Copyright law – Secures for a limited time to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries.

    (1) Covers
          i.   Life of the author +50 years
         ii.   Work created by an employee by his/her employer
        iii.   Protects expression of ideas

    (2) Does Not cover
          i.   Work or works that do not include a ©.
         ii.   Facts or Ideas
        iii.   Works used for criticism, scholarship, news, or education

    (3) Fair Use Provision – The court looks at four main areas
          i.   Nature of work – fact vs. fiction
         ii.   Amount of work borrowed – Is it the heart of the work
        iii.   Purpose of the work
        iv.   Effect on the market – Will the creator lose money over the publication of the material

3. Media

a. Identify types of media, their needs, and their audiences

    (1) Print – Need background and detail information in greater quantity and depth that broadcast media
          i.   Dailies
         ii.   Weeklies
        iii.   Magazines
        iv.   News vs. Entertainment

    (2) Radio – Needs immediate audio of the scene describing in greater detail the scene since it contains no visual.
          i.   Format
         ii.   Local, regional, syndicated

    (3) Television – wants a visual and will request immediate access to the scene.
          i.   Commercial or Public
         ii.   Cable News
        iii.   Specialty Programming

    (4) Internet – Immediate needs AND more detailed background information needs – usually has no set deadline.
          i.   News
         ii.   Specialty Information

b. Differences between local, regional, and national media and their requirements

c. Define common terms used by the media
    (1) Advisory
    (2) Backgrounder
    (3) Briefing

        (4)   Fact Sheet
        (5)   Live Shot
        (6)   M-O-S (man/woman on street interview)
        (7)   Sat Truck
        (8)   Sidebar
        (9)   Soundbite
        (10) Stringer
        (11) Talking Head
        (12) Thrill cam
        (13) Uplink
        (14) VO
        (15) Wire and Fire
        (16) Window

    d. Role of the media in Emergency situations
        (1)   Inform the public
        (2)   Reduce panic
        (3)   Monitor what's happening for the public

    e. Preparing for the media
        (1)   Set up a Media Area
        (2)   Consistently define "off limits" areas ahead of time.
        (3)   Be professional – Be accommodating
        (4)   Set parking areas for the media with their special needs in mind
              i.   Size of media vehicles
              ii.   Needs of satellite trucks for overhead "view"
              iii. Give them a view of the scene for backgrounders if possible

    f. Get to know the media – before an incident.
        (1)   News releases
        (2)   Media advisories
        (3)   Become the "local expert" – proactive info on prevention or programs
        (4)   Media kits or information
        (5)   Public service announcements
        (6)   Learn who is assigned to your area if possible
        (7)   Learn who the Sunday Editor is. (slow day = better coverage)
        (8)   Find out who the part-time or freelance people are (hungrier)
        (9)   Get to know the media at an incident
        (10) The "other" media
        (11) How to deal with an overzealous reporter
        (12) Dealing with unprofessional media
        (13) Limits to what you can legally do to restrict access
        (14) When to call Law Enforcement

4. Writing Skills
    a. Define the difference between the following;
        (1)   News release
              i.   Formal structure
              ii.   Print ready
              iii. Prioritize information – write in declining order of importance.

        (2)   Briefing bullet points
               i.   Brief list of sentences or phrases of fact
               ii.   Often used as notes for a speaker outlining key points
        (3)   Fact sheets
               i.   Bullet point list of facts
               ii.   May include a formal statement
               iii. Effective during high stress situations
               iv. Live reporters can easily refer to information on the sheet
        (4)   Backgrounder
               i.   Summary of facts, data, or information, written ahead of time and on file for quick dissemination of background information.
               ii.   Can be historical, statistical, or chronological
               iii. Generally information on the group, its capabilities, structure, leadership, or its history

5. Speaking
    a. Describe the process for preparing an oral presentation
        (1)   Six basic questions
               i.   Who is my audience?
               ii.   What is the subject?
               iii. Why were you asked to speak?
               iv. Where am I speaking?
               v.   When am I speaking?
               vi. How long am I speaking?
        (2)   Types of speeches
               i.   Educational
               ii.   Motivational
               iii. Entertainment
        (3)   Discuss the elements of a typical speech
               i.   Introduction
               ii.   Content or subject
               iii. Conclusion
        (4)   Common pitfalls of public speaking
               i.   Offensive comments , phrases, or jokes
               ii.   Verbal slights (real or perceived)
               iii. Talking down to the audience
               iv. Bad body language
               v.   Lack of preparation

6. Conducting an Interview
    a. List points to remember about interviewing
        (1)   Be compassionate
        (2)   Remember they are in a very stressful environment
        (3)   You control the interview
        (4)   Don't give out information you don't intend to
        (5)   Don't set up "false hopes"

7. Being Interviewed

    a. Identify methods to be an effective interviewee
    b. Describe how body language can effect an interview
        (1) Positively
        (2) Negatively
    c. Identify the difference between "ambush" and "prearranged" interviews
    d. List three things you must do in any interview situation
        (1) Remain calm and in control
        (2) Remember you are the source of information and you represent the ASRC
        (3) Respond honestly and in a way that sheds a positive light on the organization – no matter what the news you are about to give.
    e. List 5 musts of live interviews
        (1) Choose your words carefully
        (2) Stay calm
        (3) Maintain eye contact
        (4) Keep your answers short
        (5) Maintain control of the interview

What do you NEVER tell an interviewer and why (NO COMMENT)
        (1) Builds a wall between you and the interviewer
        (2) Appears evasive
        (3) Confirms their suspicions
        (4) Disrespectful to the interviewer
        (5) You lose credibility
        (6) Tougher questions will follow
    f. If you don't know the answer to a question list acceptable responses.
        (1) I don't know
        (2) I'll get back to you on that
        (3) I'll give you more information when I have it.

8. Press Conferences
    a. Discuss when, where, why and how a press conference should be conducted.
    b. Demonstrate the ability to set up a press conference
    c. Demonstrate the ability to set up and field hostile questions at a news briefing
    d. List the difference between a News Briefing and a News Conference
       (Briefing is conducted by the PIO, is less formal and used to give updates and or background information. The Conference is more formal, the PIO usually serves as facilitator/moderator, there is usually a brief statement followed by a question and answer period, and answers to specific questions can be delegated to specific agency representatives.)
    e. What is the most important reason to give a Press Conference instead of a briefing or individual interviews? (When you want to assure that ALL media hear the SAME THING at the SAME TIME)
    f. Explain the rule of thumb before answering any question in a conference
       (Stop, listen, and think)

9. Awareness Campaigns
    a. Define what an awareness campaign is;
    b. List purposes of an awareness campaign

(1) Inform and educate the public
(2) Increase awareness
(3) Increase the groups visibility
(4) Create goodwill

10. Know the ASRC
   a. What is the ASRC;
   b. What is the ASRC purpose;
   c. What resources can the ASRC field;
   d. How is the ASRC funded;
   e. Where does the ASRC operate;
   f. How is the ASRC activated;
   g. List the groups in the ASRC;
   h. How many members in the ASRC;
   i. Who do you ultimately answer to at base? (The IC).

11. Basic Emergency Command Structures
   a. Tell what the Incident Command System is and why it is used;
   b. What is the JIS and why is it used
   c. Define a JIC and when is it used
   d. Describe advantages to a JIC

12. Other Duties
   a. General knowledge of base procedures and practices;
   b. Demonstrate the ability to fill in various functions in base the pertain to Public Information and Public Affairs such as briefing/debriefing and interviewing tasks;
   c. Other duties as requested or tasked by ASRC Conference Chair pertaining to Public Information the Public Affairs of the Conference.

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[1] The reason for requiring a larger number of searches is that the PIO position deals with the relationships and personalities of our team as well as the relationships of the teams and agencies and individuals that we work with therefore and a larger number of "exposures" is required to gain an understanding into particular situations.

[2] Since there needs to be a PIO available at all times during a rescue operation there is a need for several levels of PIO per incident. The lead PIO should appoint at least one assistant PIO for each incident for the purposes of sleep, breaks, meetings, and general availability.