

## Writing press releases

**Resource:** Better Practices – Writing a press release

**Objective:**

The purpose of a press release is to present and convey the essence of what needs to be said on the particular matter in a timely manner. Although the primary target of a press release are the media, health crisis press releases need to be written in a way that, when fully reproduced in the media, also need to be understood by the general public.

### Description

Health crisis press releases need to have the following general characteristics:

- Provide specific and useful information
- Be written in a precise and professional manner
- Be accurate and truthful
- The content needs to be clear to the general public
- Contain information that is of an urgent nature

Health crisis press releases have the following specific characteristics:

- Provide clear identification of the source of the press release
- Be less than one page long, preferably having no more than 5 paragraphs
- Provide key information to be communicated already in the first paragraph. It should include ...
  - clearly stated information about what is the purpose of the press release
  - clearly stated reasoning as to why the press release is important and relevant
  - if necessary, information about the actions to be undertaken
- Provide well-structured information in the subsequent paragraphs. It may be organized for example under the headings: what happened, where it happened, when it happened, why it happened, who provided the information, what will/should happen next
- Provide information in the final paragraphs about ...
  - division of responsibilities between health authorities for the particular matter
  - contact addresses where additional materials/information on the particular matter can be found

Note that writing a press release does not automatically guarantee that it will be read or considered important by the media. What helps is when the press release is:

- written by a well-respected or authoritative organization that has established links with the media
- prepared so that the headline conveys urgency, relevance and action
- prepared in a professional manner

