



# MANUAL TRANSMITTAL

Department of the Treasury  
Internal Revenue Service

11.1.3

OCTOBER 10, 2014

## EFFECTIVE DATE

(10-10-2014)

## PURPOSE

- (1) This transmits revised IRM 11.1.3, *Communications, Contact with the Public and the Media*.

## MATERIAL CHANGES

- (1) IRM 11.1.3 is updated to incorporate guidance on usage of new media and social media tools.

## EFFECT ON OTHER DOCUMENTS

IRM 11.1.3 dated November 24, 2009 is superseded.

## AUDIENCE

All Operating and Functional Divisions

Signed by  
Terry L. Lemons  
Director  
Office of Communications



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11.1.3

Contact with the Public and the Media

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11.1.3.1  
(10-10-2014)  
**Purpose**

- (1) This chapter outlines the basic IRS methods for disseminating information to the public through personal contact and the media. The methods are described in general terms and the omission of any method or media type does not mean its use, if warranted, is prohibited.

11.1.3.2  
(10-10-2014)  
**Definition of Media**

- (1) For the purpose of this IRM, media includes:
  - **Traditional Media** — television, radio, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, tax press and other print publications.
  - **Social Media** — terms used to describe Web-based or digital, computerized, or networked information and communication technologies. These can take many different forms, including Internet forums, blogs, wikis, podcasts, and picture-, music- and video-sharing. Examples of social media applications are Google+, Wikipedia, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, Flickr, Twitter and Tumblr.

11.1.3.3  
(10-10-2014)  
**Media Responsibilities**

- (1) The National and Field Media Relations Branches are responsible for developing and implementing an overall media strategy in support of the entire agency, including the Operating Divisions/Functional Divisions. The Media Relations staff serves as the IRS single point of contact for all media. This includes handling media requests, directly interacting with the media and coordinating responses with NHQ Operating/Functional Office's Communications Specialists, NHQ executives or other designated personnel. The National Media Relations Branch serves as single point of contact for national media, national stories or NHQ issues. National Media Relations also is responsible for pitching IRS stories on various topics and initiatives to national media outlets and coordinating and publishing all national news releases for the Agency. The field Media Relations Branch is comprised of geographically distributed Field Media Relations Specialists, who serve as single points of contact for the local media, local stories or field geographic issues. For additional information about National Media Relations, call the Branch Chief, National Media Relations at 202-317-4000. For additional information about Field Media Relations, call the Branch Chief, Field Media Relations at 414-231-2251.
- (2) If employees are contacted by the media for the purpose of obtaining the official IRS position regarding procedures, policies or other matters, employees must refer the media inquiry to their National or Field Media Relations Office. However, IRS employees may communicate with media officials orally, in writing and online, to express their views on matters of public concern without prior notification of, consultation with, or approval from the Office of Media Relations or any IRS supervisory authority. When communicating with the media under these circumstances, however, employees must make clear that they are expressing their own personal opinions and are not acting as official IRS spokespersons. Moreover, employees may not reveal matters protected from disclosure by law. Employees should refer tax law and case-related questions to the appropriate area of the IRS and inquiries from tax practitioners to the proper stakeholder relations office. If employees have questions regarding their communications with the media, they may contact their National or Field Media Relations Office for assistance.
- (3) When using social media tools off-hours or for personal reasons, employees should use discretion when using their IRS job title or the name of an IRS office to reduce the impression that employees are speaking on behalf of the Internal Revenue Service. To uphold the IRS standard for integrity, employees

should follow the IRS Code of Conduct and *Plain Talk About Ethics and Conduct*. Ensure your comments and postings are truthful, accurate, fair and can be substantiated. Do not post disparaging comments about individuals or groups.

- (4) IRS employees are personally responsible for all their personal media activity whether that be in person, in writing, on the telephone or online. This includes any interaction conducted with an IRS email address, and/or which can be traced back to an IRS domain. Follow the IRS Code of Conduct and *Plain Talk About Ethics and Conduct*, Document 12011. Ensure your comments and postings are truthful, accurate, fair and can be substantiated. Do not post disparaging comments about individuals or groups.

11.1.3.4  
(10-10-2014)  
**News Conferences and Briefings**

- (1) These methods of disseminating information involve inviting a number of representatives of mass media to a meeting with one or more knowledgeable IRS officials. A typical conference may consist of an oral announcement by Service officials, the distribution of a release or other background material and an oral question-and-answer exchange.
- (2) The news conference or briefing is used only for matters of substantial importance to the public when the issuance of a release alone will not adequately serve the purpose. For example, the complexity of an important matter may require a face-to-face or telephonic discussion with mass media representatives to ensure proper coverage. In other cases it may be advisable to invite reporters to a briefing and provide a single explanation to all members of the media at the same time. Media Relations must be contacted in advance of scheduling any news conference or briefing.

11.1.3.5  
(10-10-2014)  
**Products and Services**

- (1) Products and Services of the National and Field Media Relations Branches include:
  - Press Releases/Media Advisories
  - Media Interviews/Inquiries
  - Commissioner and Other Top Level Executive Interviews
  - The Newsroom
  - Email Subscriptions
- (2) **Press Releases/Media Advisories** are used to disseminate messages and information to the media. Generally, NHQ Communications & Liaison Media Relations (national or field) determines that a press release is needed and contacts the Operating/Functional Division Communications Specialist to request either information or a draft news release. Sometimes the Operating/Functional Division contacts Media Relations (national or field) to ask for help in getting a message out to the media. In these cases, the content owner creates the first draft, Media Relations edits it for media audiences, and together they agree on final copy.
- (3) **Media Interviews & Inquiries:** National Headquarters Communications and Liaison Media Relations (national or field) handles all requests by major media. The Operating Division/Functional Division Communications Specialist contacts NHQ Communications & Liaison Media Relations (national or field) before responding to a major national or local media outlet. If employees are contacted by the media for the purpose of obtaining the official IRS position regarding procedures, policies or other matters, they must refer the media inquiry to

Media Relations or their embedded communications director. They will consult on an approach for an appropriate response.

- (4) **Commissioner and Other Top Level Executive Interviews** : Upon request, the IRS Commissioner and other top level executives will occasionally grant media interviews. Requests for executive interviews should be directed to the National Media Relations Branch when the requestor is a national media outlet and to the Field Media Relations Branch when the requestor is a local media outlet.
- (5) **The Newsroom**: Found on the IRS Web site at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov), *The Newsroom* is a collage of the latest information geared to the media to include news releases, fact sheets, problem alerts, tax tips and other current events. The National Media Relations Branch has direct content ownership and maintenance of *The Newsroom*.
- (6) **Email Subscriptions** make it easy for tax professionals and taxpayers to get tax forms and information from the IRS. Subscribers receive intermittent electronic mailings with information about important upcoming tax dates, what is new on the IRS Web site, recently added tax forms, publications, and IRS news releases, and special IRS announcements. Available subscriptions include:
  - GuideWire, providing Revenue Rulings, Revenue Procedures, Notices, and Announcements.
  - NewsWire subscribers receive News Releases issued by the National Media Relations office.
  - Tax Tips provide brief, concise guidance on a variety of topics including preparing tax returns, avoiding common errors, available deductions and credits, tax law updates, where to get free tax help, and more.

#### 11.1.3.6 (10-10-2014) **Clearance of Materials for Publication**

- (1) IRS employees who are invited or are requesting permission to write about tax matters for outside publications must clear their final manuscript and/or materials with their business unit communications function. Approval of manuscripts will not be granted for material that deals with pending legislation; specific cases awaiting final disposition by the Service; proposed regulations, procedures and policies which have not been finally and officially announced; or any information that is legally or administratively restricted.
- (2) The following statement will be made a part of each manuscript, located preferably between the title and the body of the manuscript: "The content of this article is the opinion of the writer and does not necessarily represent the position of the Internal Revenue Service."
- (3) Requests for clearance that involve a potentially controversial issue or where there is doubt regarding jurisdiction must be evaluated by the business unit Communications & Liaison office. The business unit is responsible for coordinating the approval and/or forwarding the potentially controversial issue to the National Director of Communications.
- (4) For additional guidance, please refer to Policy Statement 1–181 (IRM 1.2.19).

#### 11.1.3.7 (10-10-2014) **Additional Information**

- (1) For additional information about disseminating information to the public through personal contact and the media, contact Chief, National Media Relations at 202-317-4000.

