

Policy 1-1.2.001: Public Communications/Relations

Introduction

Clackamas River Water (the District) is a Municipal Water Provider within Clackamas County. The District's service goal is to "provide the highest quality, safe drinking water to our customers at rates consistent with responsible planning for the long term health of our district.

Vital to achieving these goals, standards and overall business success, is a positive reputation and public perception of the District. Communicating the District's messages, objectives and values in an honest, competent and consistent manner that supports the District's standards of excellence greatly impacts public perception.

1. **Purpose** – The purpose of this policy is to establish District external communication standards that:
 - 1.1. Serve as guidelines for language, practices, attitudes and behaviors of those involved in District communications
 - 1.2. Ensure that the District is visible, accessible and accountable
 - 1.3. Reflect the District citizens' expectations of public servants: honesty, dedication and competence
 - 1.4. Minimize the risk that improper and unauthorized external communications will negatively impact the District's reputation.
2. **Policy**
 - 2.1. The District provides accurate, timely, relevant and understandable information to the public about District policies, programs, and services.
 - 2.2. The District uses a variety of methods to communicate District information, and provides this information in formats that accommodate the needs of all residents, customers and public members.
 - 2.3. Visual and stylistic consistency is created in all communications to build trust and a clear and unified vision of the District.
3. **Procedures**

3.1. Required District Communication Behaviors – All District employees represent the District in their professional conduct and their internal, as well as external, communication. As a whole, the District strives to achieve the following organizational behaviors. Individual employees support these behaviors in the best fashion their respective positions allow.

3.1.1. Be open to receive questions and inform.

3.1.2. Focus on information that accommodates the needs of the customer.

3.1.3. Be accessible to media and public.

3.1.4. Be willing to respond, or get back to interested party with required information.

3.1.5. Use simple and direct language.

3.1.6. Communicate “with one voice,” for consistency and trust.

3.1.7. Cooperate with media.

3.1.8. Provide full, fair, accurate, timely and understandable disclosure in all reports and documents publicly released by the District.

3.2. Prohibited District Communication Behaviors – The inadequate, or inappropriate, actions or communications of an individual District employee reflect on the District as a whole. The District prohibits, and minimizes the potential for, the following behaviors or perceived characteristics in all District external communications.

3.2.1. Delay in responding or delivering information

3.2.2. Aloofness, stonewalling, indifference

3.2.3. Arrogance and defensiveness

3.2.4. Discrimination among media for non-strategic reasons (i.e. ideological)

3.2.5. Discrimination of those who oppose policies or actions just for that reason

- 3.2.6.** Exclusion of other citizens or organizations which might have an interest or make a contribution
- 3.3. Routine Operational Inquiries (Customer Account Inquiries, Comments, etc)** - All routine operational inquiries are referred to, and addressed by, the appropriately responsible District employee.
- 3.3.1.** All customer communication is professional, courteous, timely and conducted with integrity. (For further guidance regarding customer communications refer to District Policy 1-3.1.001: Employee Ethics, Standards and Practices)
- 3.3.2.** All customer comments and complaints are addressed and responded to fairly and in an unbiased manner, with review and support of the appropriate supervisor, as necessary.
- 3.4. General, Non-Routine District Inquiries** – All inquiries of the District, other than routine operational inquiries, are to be referred to, and addressed by or through, the District spokesperson.
- 3.4.1.** The General Manager, or designee, serves as the District spokesperson.
- 3.4.2.** The District spokesperson serves as the primary contact with the news media, prepares announcements for dissemination, writes articles and supplies information in answer to specific requests from individuals and organizations.
- 3.4.3.** The District spokesperson designates specific employees to address and respond to specific inquiries, as deemed necessary and appropriate, to utilize area expertise in competently and completely addressing inquiries.
- 3.4.4.** No employee communicates with the media without approval and advice of the District spokesperson.
- 3.4.5.** Designated spokespersons only speak on behalf of the District on issues directly related to their specific area of expertise, and do not address inquiries related to other topics or issues.
- 3.5. District Public Records Requests** – Upon request, in accordance with ORS Chapter 192, the District makes available public records, except those exempt from disclosure, at cost to the District.

3.5.1. Request Format – A person or organization requests to inspect or receive copies of a District public record or information from District public records in person at District Administrative offices, by mail or by e-mail, utilizing the District Public Records Request form. Information detailed on this form includes, but is not limited to:

- Name and address of requestor
- Contact information (phone number, e-mail address, etc.) of requestor
- Specifically identified types of records, including subject matter, approximate dates, names, etc.
- Indication of inspection activity or copy format and number of copies requested

3.5.2. Acknowledgement of Request — The District will acknowledge a request within five business days after receiving the request. The acknowledgement will indicate whether the District has possession of the requested public records.

3.5.3. Additional Information — Additional information may be requested of the requestor to clarify the request. If the District requests additional information, the Response under section 3.5.5 may be delayed until the requestor has responded with the additional information. The public records request will be closed after 60 days if there is no response from the requestor.

3.5.4. Fee — Requested public record copies are provided at a fee reasonably calculated to reimburse the District for the actual costs incurred in making the records available. Activities reimbursed on an at-cost basis included locating, compiling, summarizing, printing, copying and distributing the information, and taking any other steps reasonably required to make District information available.

- The District establishes and revises a fee structure to be fairly and consistently applied to all public records requests.
- The person or organization requesting the records provides fee payment prior to District preparation of the requested records. The timeline for provision of the requested records begins upon District receipt of fee payment.
- The District furnishes copies of public information without charge or at a substantially reduced fee if the District determines the waiver or reduction of fees is in the public interest because making the record available primarily benefits the general public, per ORS 192.440(4). All waivers or reductions in these fees are approved in writing by the General Manager.
- The person or organization requesting the records has 60 days from when the requestor is notified that there is a fee in order to pay the fee. If the requestor

requests a fee waiver, the requestor has 60 days from when the requestor is notified that the fee waiver was denied to pay the fee.

- If the District requires payment of a fee, the Response under section 3.5.5 may be delayed until the requestor has paid the fee. If the requestor does not pay the fee within 60 days, the District will close the public records request.

3.5.5. Response — The District provides reasonable accommodation in researching, collecting and providing access to records requested through the public records request process.

- The District completes responses to public records requests as soon as practicable and without unreasonable delay.
- The District will provide records for inspection within 10 business days after acknowledging the request unless when necessary staff is unavailable, the District is handling a large volume of public records requests, or where meeting the deadlines would impede the District's ability to perform other necessary services, in which case the District will provide the requestor a reasonable estimated date by which the District will provide the response based upon the information that the District has available at the time of the estimate.
- In order to safeguard District assets, the District provides copies of public records, not the original records. Exceptions to this are requested and approved by the General Manager in writing. All original record inspections are conducted on-site at the District Administrative office only.
- The District reserves the right to provide information in a different format than requested if the burden of meeting the requested format is impractical.
- The District is not obligated to create new information or information in a new format using its resources.
- The District is only obligated to make available for inspection records that exist at the time of the request. New requests are required for new information or future information on a continuous basis.

3.5.6. Completion of Response. The District will deem a response to a request for public records completed when the District:

3.6. External Communication Initiated by District – When initiating external communication for purposes of public service, education, general announcement, or operations, the District utilizes a diverse menu of communication tools (print, broadcast, web, etc.) to effectively and efficiently achieve its communication goals.

3.7. Publication Protocols and Standards – All District-initiated external communications, whether in response to inquiry or for District purpose, adhere to District publication protocols and standards. By adhering to publication protocols and standards, District communications have visual and stylistic consistency and an elevated impact and effectiveness.

3.7.1. District Logo

- This is the District official logo:



- The District official, approved logo is prominently displayed on the cover page and /or first pages of all District publications.
- The logo is only utilized in the approved colors: black and white, blue and green.
- The logo is reproduced from reproduction-quality art or from high-resolution digital files.
- The logo is not altered from its official state. Text is not added to the logo.
- The District logo is maintained by Administrative Services.

3.7.2. Templates – Standard templates are designed and utilized for the various communication formats: e-mail, online, mailed or hard copy handout, etc. These templates are maintained by Administrative Services.

3.7.3. Letterhead, Envelopes and Business Cards – Standard templates are designed and utilized for all District communication supplies (i.e. letterhead, stationery, business forms, envelopes, business cards, etc.). These templates are maintained by Administrative Services. Only authorized and approved District communication supplies are used to conduct District business.

3.7.4. Editing/Proofing– All external District communications are proofed and edited for content, as well as grammatical accuracy, appropriateness and effectiveness in delivering the desired message.

3.8. Monitoring and Reporting

3.8.1. All external District communications are reviewed and approved by the District spokesperson prior to being delivered and/or distributed.

3.8.2. This policy is periodically reviewed, and revised if necessary, by the General Manager, or designee, to ensure adequate and appropriate policy controls and adherence.

4. Definitions

4.1. Logo – the official graphic identity of an organization or group

4.2. Public Body - Per ORS Chapter 192, “ ‘public body’ includes every state officer, agency, department, division, bureau, board and commission; every county and city governing body, school district, special district, municipal corporation, and any board, department, commission, council, or agency thereof; and any other public agency of this state.”

4.3. Public Record – Per ORS Chapter 192, “ ‘public record’ includes, but is not limited to, a document, book, paper, photograph, file, sound recording or machine readable electronic record, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made, received, filed or recorded in pursuance of law or in connection with the transaction of public business, whether or not confidential or restricted in use. ‘Public Record’ does not include:

- Records of the Legislative Assembly, its committees, officers and employees
- Library and museum materials made or acquired and preserved solely for reference or exhibition purposes
- Records or information concerning the location of archaeological sites or objects as those terms are defined in ORS 358.905
- Extra copies of a document, preserved only for convenience of reference
- A stock of publications
- Messages on voice mail or on other telephone message storage and retrieval systems”

4.4. Records Exempt from Disclosure – Public records noted as exempt from Oregon disclosure law, ORS Chapter 192, and detailed in ORS 192.410 through ORS 192.505.

5. References

District Policy 1-1.1.001: Organizational Structure

Operations Manual | Policies and Procedures – Volume 1: General Resources

Chapter | Section 1.2: Administration | Communications

Policy 1-1.2.001: Public Communications/Relations

District Policy 1-1.4.006: Use of IT Assets & Communication Resources

District Policy 1-1.6.001: Records Retention

District Policy 1-3.1.001: Employee Ethics, Standards and Practices

ORS Chapter 192, Records; Public Reports and Meetings

ODFW Public Records Requests, Policy DO_100_03

Portland Police Bureau Public Records Request policy

Communication Standards presentation, Elena Serrano, City of Maputo, Mozambique, 2008

Internal and External Communications Style Guide, 2010, UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center

6. Supersedes

This policy supersedes all prior District policies, documents, letters, memoranda, and understandings on the subjects contained in it.

7. Policy Authority

Prepared for Carol Bryck, Chief Financial Officer, Clackamas River Water
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8. Approval and Revision Dates

Approved by Todd Heidgerken General Manager, Clackamas River Water



Todd Heidgerken
General Manager, Clackamas River Water

Approval Date	12/20/2011
Implementation Date	12/20/2011
Subsequent Revision and Approval Dates	01/24/2018
Next Scheduled Review Date	01/31/2019