

2013 NGB Media Contest Report to State PAOs

General: The Department of Defense and Service Media Contests are an annual event that take place January through March. Units should mark their respective training calendars accordingly. Army and Air National Guard Public Affairs practitioners should plan throughout the year for these contests by earmarking their best works in order to simplify the selection process in November/December prior to the contest deadlines. In addition, individuals must read through the standard operating procedures to ensure that their entries are submitted in accordance with established standards, criteria and guidance. Should you have concerns or questions, email or contact listed Points of Contact. NGB-PA is reviewing its processes to provide continued improvements and streamline this program.

1. The 2013 Contest contained challenges due to two separate contest periods; and untimely release of information for National Guard Airmen and Soldiers. Despite the initial kickoff to the contest, response was overwhelming. (See item b.)
2. Entries. Both contests had an overwhelming response from the field with 885 entries submitted via the ftp site for both contests (422 for the Air Force Media Contest in 29 categories and 463 for the Keith L. Ware Contest in 30 categories).
3. The Media Contest team answered more than 100 email and numerous phone calls regarding established guidance for both contests.
4. Disqualification.
 - Air Force: 40.75 percent of entries were disqualified
 - Keith L. Ware: 19.87 percent of entries were disqualified

Entry disqualification was due to failure to follow established instructions as annotated below. Common errors to both contests included: Incomplete entry forms, missing entry forms, entry forms not signed by appropriate chain of command or Public Affairs personnel, missing category requirements, and entries submitted in the wrong category (Judges disqualified).

a. NGB SOP (pg. 2.):

This year's contest has been simplified with all Army submissions will follow all procedures outlined in the Keith L. Ware SOP and all Air Force submissions will follow the Air Force Media Contest SOP. This includes the service-prescribed file naming conventions – there will be NO unique naming procedures for the National Guard-level of the competitions. Additionally – All entry forms MUST be signed by the unit, wing or State PAO. Signatures may be digital or handwritten. Entries not following either of these stipulations will be rejected.

b. AF Media Contest SOP:

(1) 2.10: **Entry Forms.** An official entry form is required for all contest entries. Entries without a completed form will not be judged in the competition.

(2) 2.16: Failure to follow submission guidelines may result in disqualification as determined by the program manager.

(3) 3.1: 1 Overview. Submissions to the media contest must be approved by the contestant's chain of command and submitted through their respective MAJCOM, FOA, DRU or DoD activity.

Web, Print, New Media, General Guidelines, page 12

7.1.4 Prepare photographs in accordance with Attachment 5, Packaging of Photography and Graphics Entries.

Graphics Categories: General Guidelines, page 19

8.1.4: Prepare photographs in accordance with Attachment 5, Packaging of Photography and Graphics Entries.

Attachment 5, paragraph 4 states All pictures will contain captions with the Visual Information Record Identification Number (VIRIN) removed

Captions. Page 47. Caption sheets are required as a separate word or text file.

Photography Categories 18-28: General Guidelines, page 21

9.1.7: All photo submissions must contain a separate Microsoft Word or text document with a caption sheet. Identifying information will be removed prior to judging.

Broadcast Categories: General Guidelines, page 25

10.1.4 Prepare entries in accordance with Attachment 8, Packaging Broadcast Entries.

c. Keith L. Ware Contest SOP:

(1) Pg. 5. I. (e) Eligibility: Government contract employees are not authorized to compete in any individual category.

(2) Pg. 9. COMREL: Limit packets to 20 total printed pages.

(3) Pg. 11. VI. A. Submission Guidelines. (1) Submit all entries as URL links on the entry form.

(4) Pg. 12. Publications belong to the sponsoring regional command, even when that deployment is over. Units deployed with a stated return date must submit that field publication to the regional command they are or were supporting rather than their permanent regional command.

(5) Pg. 12. (2) All platforms must be registered as the unit's official presence with OCPA's Online and Social Media Division. See www.army.mil/socialmedia.

Your platform was also checked against the registry on www.nationalguard.mil.

(6) PRINT Missing Category Requirements:

a. Category D: Must include at least 2 digital communication platforms used to achieve unit communication objectives.

b. Category E: 2-page documentation package composed of a background paper and a products and air history sheet.

c. Category F: Background paper.

d. Category J: Two or more feature articles dealing with a common theme.

e. Category K: Two or more examples of photojournalism, each, with two or more photographs, captions, and a story)

- f. Category M: Captions missing
- g. Categories N, O, P: Required samples missing. Judges Disqualification.

BROADCAST Categories. Entries disqualified based on the following:

- (1) Products longer than required length specified by category.
- (2) Products missing required elements stated by category.
- (3) URLs missing.
- (4) Contributors listed on individual category.
- (5) Broken links
- (6) Categories N, O, P. Missing one requirement from a-f.
- (7) Pg. 22. Video submissions: Each entry must have the following elements in order:
 - a. A 10-second slate, including the led and tag for Categories J-L.
 - b. Five seconds of black.
 - c. The entry.
- (8) Submitted in the wrong category. Judges disqualified.

5. Why entries didn't place...Overall Judges feedback is provided below:

PRINT

Civilian Enterprise Publications

- Leads buried - Articles too long and don't get to the point
- Layouts too busy
- Lack of pull quotes and supporting graphics
- Mechanics – grammar, spelling, punctuation
- Broken links
- Proof photos or violations
- Beware of changes in background pages, use of colors and images and too many fonts: these can be distractors rather than attractors to your pages.
- Consistency with AP Style, grammar (hyphenation, capitalization, and spelling errors).

Army Funded Publications

- Use cut-out images on double-truck layout for variety
- Spacing between text/paragraphs and fonts used
- Masthead missing
- Viewing method difficult – does not allow viewer to see the entire page at one time

Digital Publications:

- Social Media icons not compliant
- Outdated news stories on home page (Breaking News)
- Mechanics – grammar, spelling, punctuation
- Too much white space on homepage
- Broken links

New Media:

- Some Facebook posts too long

- Inconsistency in posting frequency
- Lack of response to Facebook questions/comments/posts
- Remove URLs from Facebook posts
- Should not post names/phone numbers on public posts
- Missing photo captions
- Correct/edit misspellings on posts
- Infrequent Twitter posts

News Article

- Judges felt submissions were not strong news stories, but features. Know the difference and submit in the proper category (news contains who, what, where, when in the lead)
- Acronym use
- Single-source stories, no use of quotes, alternate source material
- Consistency with AP Style, grammar (hyphenation, capitalization, and spelling errors)

Feature Article

- Find the balance in using quotes; don't overuse, and use correctly

Commentary

- Most commentary entries were actually news
- Additional editing would provide a stronger product
- Consistency with AP Style, grammar (hyphenation, capitalization, and spelling errors).
- Watch out for run on sentences

Photojournalism/News Photo/Feature Photo

- CATs K/N. Most entries failed to provide the proper requirements. See category requirements.
- Get down on the same level as your subject
- Use fill light from a bounced flash to increase overall illumination and lower the contrast
- Consider the nature of your story and relook photos to ensure you have the strongest connection to provide your reader
- When shooting change of commands there are always two principals – the outgoing and the incoming commanders. Both need to be visible. You have to move quickly to get a clear shot.
- Look at your photos – is there something in the foreground or background that is a distractor and can be cropped out to enhance your image
- Broken links
- Incomplete cutlines
- Wrong category (Submitted in Cat. L(News)/Judges felt entry should be in Cat M (Features))

COMREL:

Individual

- Reach analysis would have strengthened packet

Program

- Ensure program does not violate Community Relations Policy or Service Regulations
- Wrong Category
- Reach analysis would have strengthened packet
- Messaging missing
- State objectives clearly
- Recommend inclusion of media/social media coverage/web-based interaction
- Training/internal culture not relevant to community relations
- Recommend inclusion of speaking engagements to strengthen packet

Special Event

- State objectives clearly
- Recommend inclusion of media/social media coverage/web-based interaction
- Analysis missing

BROADCAST

- Watch out for low audio and loud soundtracks that overpowers talent, interviewee
- Watch out for dead space before interviews
- Transition music smoother
- Watch readability of fonts used on video information programs
- Video information programs need shot variety and narration with context
- Broken links
- Know the difference between News and Features
- News reports lacked creativity in editing and shot selection
- News reports do not start a piece with a sound bite that is not covered by video
- News reports need to include subjects in piece (single source vs. SME)
- Hard news stories don't use dissolves as transitions (used in features)
- Edit to a rhythm (at natural break points in a script, not every 5 seconds or so)
- Use of natural sound vs. consistent sequencing
- Awkward Q&A segments
- Watch out for glass reflections
- Watch for production value, music underscores, use of graphics in documentary productions
- Watch harsh lighting and overexposure
- Watch focus problems
- Don't cut out of a pan still in motion
- Weak closing shots
- Products need 3-shot sequencing and matched actions
- Shaky video – cutaways (use a tripod)
- Use a lavalier mic for sound bites. Hide cord under shirt or pin from back.
- Awkward interview seating
- With an event with repeat action (serves, spikes) you can get some matched action shots
- Watch out for 180 degree violations
- Watch over-enunciation
- Watch editing narration sentences too closely