



ASF Media Contact Policy and Guidelines

Adopted by Council: 4-Jan-2020

ASF Media Contact Policy

This policy applies to situations where ASF members interact with media as representatives of ASF or of ASF bodies (e.g. ASF Commissions).

This policy is designed to ensure that any comments made to the media are consistent and are in accordance with ASF principles; that in all dealings with the media ASF acts in a professional, coordinated manner; and that all statements made are accurate and appropriate.

For the purposes of this policy, media contact includes, but is not limited to, providing information via media releases or statements; letters to the editor; responding to media enquiries over the phone and via email; interviews or briefings; disclosing information to the media; comments on talkback radio; addressing a seminar or conference where the media are present; and media activities for events, reports, and launches.

Social Media (e.g. Facebook) is a separate policy, except for when comments may overlap with points 12, 13 or 14.

ASF Media Contact Guidelines

1. People speaking to the media may only associate themselves with ASF if:
 - a) they are a current ASF Executive member, or
 - b) they have been asked by the Executive to comment, or
 - c) they are an ASF Commissioner and are commenting within their jurisdiction, or
 - d) their contact details have been included in an ASF media release, or
 - e) they are otherwise authorised by ASF.
2. Such people should take care that they only give their ASF affiliation to the interviewer.
3. When doing media interviews, ASF members cannot use their ASF membership or affiliation in their title unless they are authorised by these Guidelines to represent ASF.
4. The role of the ASF media spokesperson is to advise of ASF's position and to educate the public about Speleology. This includes cave science, recreational caving, cave diving, cave conservation, caving ethics, caving safety, caving techniques, and cave rescue.
5. All comments should adhere to the highest standards of ethics and integrity and should avoid comments that are defamatory, sexist, racist, ageist or homophobic.
6. Privacy laws must be adhered to, as must rules relating to comments on court-related cases.
7. ASF media spokespeople should ensure that they avoid endorsement of any specific commercial product and should avoid commenting in areas where commercial products are involved.
8. ASF media spokespeople must avoid commenting to the media when they have a conflict of interest.

9. The ASF Executive committee may disallow any person, including a current Executive member, from associating themselves with the ASF in the media.
10. ASF member clubs have the right to determine their own media interactions but must not indicate that they are speaking for the ASF without prior approval as outlined above. In such cases, however, they are still expected to adhere to the requirements of points 5 and 6.
11. The ASF Executive may compile a list of people who are authorised to speak on behalf of the ASF in emergency situations, such as cave-related accidents and cave rescue.
12. If a member of ASF, who is not authorised to represent ASF, is contacted by the media for comment, they may not in any way suggest they are representing an ASF view or position. They must make it be clear that they are commenting as an individual or on behalf of their club. In such case, however, they are still expected to adhere to the requirements of point 5 and 6.
13. In the case of a cave-related fatality, no authorised spokesperson, or ASF member, should comment publicly. Instead they should refer the matter to the Emergency Service undertaking the rescue or dealing with the fatality.
14. If an ASF member, including an Executive member or Commissioner, is contacted by the media during a rescue, or any other high public-profile event, and they feel unwilling or unprepared to comment, they should refer the media contact to another ASF representative or to the Emergency Service media unit or Emergency Service officer-in-charge of the incident.
15. During Conferences, the Conference Convener (or their nominee) is the representative to contact the local media about the conference.