

## Maintaining Media Relationships

After you determine the media outlets you plan to target, it is generally best to build relationships with one or two journalists. With this method, reporters/producers will become familiar with your work and will cover your stories more accurately. They may also rely on you as an expert on alternative fuels, alternative fuel vehicles, and the training that goes along with them.

No matter how good the journalist, he or she will simplify your information. The media represent the general public, so they need to boil down your material to make it understandable to the average person who is not familiar with environmental jargon. This should not matter. Try to ignore minor errors if the overall story is balanced and accurate.

To maintain good relationships with members of the media, follow these guidelines:

- Field press calls efficiently and positively. If you miss the initial call from a reporter/producer, call him back promptly and ask how you can help.
- Be sure to ask the journalist when his deadline is. This is extremely important; if you miss the deadline, chances are your story will not be covered.
- If the reporter requests to interview someone other than you (perhaps your supervisor and/or an executive director), contact that person immediately and tell her when the journalist's deadline is.
- Decide on a time for the interview, giving the reporter plenty of time between the meeting and his deadline. Call the reporter back and let him know when the interview will occur and who the interviewee will be.
- Prepare background information and/or press release to hand to the journalist when he arrives.
- Understand that the reporter may cancel the interview or occasionally not show up if breaking news happens to trump your appointment. Try not to get upset. This is normal in the news business and is not an insult to you, your organization or your event. Simply call the journalist and ask if he would like to reschedule.