

Video PSAs

Every television station has video/DVD machines; it seems, in every office. Therefore, you must move into the video age to compete with other agencies vying for airtime.

To bring you up to date in videoing technology, call your Visual Information specialist and set up an appointment to tour and learn. Hands-on training is heard to beat. Then, when you are back at the lake and run into a snag, the Visual Information tech probably will be able to answer your questions over the phone.

Now that you have evaluated the video capabilities at District, you have a camera and tapes on hand, the practice sessions are over, and you are ready for water safety action.

There will be times when the TV folks will have headline news, thus keeping them from covering your event. However, if you have a video camera, it could be possible to still get airtime. Take your time shooting. Try to hold the camera as steady as possible. Use a tripod if available. You might not make the news, but remember there are other programs where your tape will seem like gold.

If there's an accident, get someone to shoot it if at all possible. Sure, getting the emergency crew on-station will be paramount, but try and video the scene. If a barge turns over in the lock chamber, video it. If a bass boat crashes into a houseboat, video it. If there is a Fall Color Cruise boating along the autumn-leafed banks and through your lock, video it. If barge traffic is backed up to China at your lock, video it. If you discover a crack in the power plant bulkhead, video it. Anything out of the ordinary, video it.

If you need a water safety school program, the video camera could be just what the doctor ordered. Instead of telling the students what the Corps of Engineers

folks do on the lake, show them. Faces mean so much to everyone. This way, they will know who the Resource Manager is, who the Rangers are, etc. Again, the best "mind" for this project is the Visual Information specialist. They are more professional and will be able to edit the footage, add a title, Corps logo, maybe some music and the ending.

If you want to localize some PSAs, it is time to contact the District PAO and Visual Information personnel. Probably 90 percent of the Districts do not have the capability of totally producing high quality PSAs for metro level or higher TV stations. This leaves your locally produced PSAs to be given to public broadcast stations, public access channels, education television networks and government-operated outlets. That's a big market, too. The other method is to contract out the PSA package and that's expensive, but it can be done.

So you want to localize, anyway. Let's say you are lucky and have a super Visual Illustration shop. Who is going to appear, what message do you want to present, who is going to write the script, how many do you need, what will be the length of time (10-, 20-, 30-, 60-seconds), where will the scenes be taken, when do you plan to shoot the field footage? Once these questions are answered it will be time to proceed.

Some politicians and celebrities provide excellent testimonials to localize PSAs, for both TV and radio.

Videoing is in its infancy at most Corps field facilities, but before long you will be up and running like a cheetah.

Is it time for sounds like, "Roll 'em. Action!" to come from your lake? Have you thought about which role the Resource Manager or the District Engineer will play? How about yourself? Are you going to be the scriptwriter, cameraperson or director? Is it possible to convince the local TV station to film and produce the spots? It's a thought. Good luck, whichever method you choose.