

# Sign-ons and Sign-offs

When radio and television stations begin daily broadcasting, most start with a patriotic song. An exception to this rule is 24-hour-a-day radio stations. Usually they have no opening or closing. Probably 99 percent of the television stations have another type of flag-raising video together with the National Anthem or similar type American patriotic music when they first come on the airways.

Both radio cassettes and videotapes wear out and must be replaced. Enter the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with replacements.

Starting with radio. Turn on the station and listen to what is played. Remember, radio stations do not like to play the same sign-ons or sign-offs all the time. Changing and/or upgrading are good for business.

Now, what do you want the radio station to sign-on/sign-off with? The U.S. Army Band produces an outstanding rendition of the National Anthem and other great songs. You might ask the Visual Information person at the District to create a few demo cassettes to take with you. By localizing the cassette with the station's call letters, you increase the probability of being successful.

You could use the same opening the station is using, but add the Army Band version of the song and then your ending tag, "... this sign-on is provided by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Station WAKE. Start the day off by thinking safety ... please, wear your life jacket on the lake. Have a good day."

For the sign-offs you could add, "... this sign-off is provided by the US Army Corps of Engineers and Station KZZZ in hopes you will wear your life jacket on the lake, night or day it's your friend for LIFE. Good night."

Make sure each radio station's product is a little different, with a different water safety message. Also, check with the program director to see how often they will need replacing. See, you are going for a long-term commitment, not just a one-shot arrangement.

Television, the visual medium, is different still. A few use 35mm slides with the sound track. If so, have someone take real clear, sharp, color slides of uniformed Corps employees-- say, rangers -- hoisting the colors up one beautiful morning in front of the resource managers office. If the station uses a series of slides, start your series with the rangers standing at attention holding the triangular-shaped flag next to the flagpole. Slide two could be the hooking of the flag to the pulling rope. Slide three could be the flag just leaving the one ranger's hands headed up the pole, while the other ranger pulls the rope. Slide four is taken at the halfway point Slide five is "shot" just as it nears the top. Slide six could be the rangers saluting the flag as it proudly unfurls in the wind. Slide six would stay on until the song ends. Slide seven could be a joint slide with the Corps logo and the stations call letters.

This will require the Visual Information person to put the sound with the slides. It will take a little time to package it. Just a reminder. With the sign-offs the flag goes down and the slides are reversed, but they should be reshot because the lighting at the end of the day is naturally different than sunrise.

Most of the larger television stations want professional video sign-on/offers. That's what you should give them. Bring the VI specialist out to the lake and create the scene of the flag going up. Then, during one evening, have it going down. When the VI person is there, restage the flag going up

with different rangers or uniformed Corps employees. Maybe pull the flag up six or seven times, that would include 12 to 14 folks. This way, when you change the song to replace the used sign-on/off, the audience will see different Corps folks.

When it is airing, videotape the sign-on and a few seconds of the station's personality. Add to that video the ending station's personality and your sign-off. Back in the VI shop, add a title before the sign-on and the local Corps logo after the sign-off. Send a copy of this forward to help others and use this sample while trying to get other stations, even in other cities, to use the Corps sign-on/off water safety methods.

Once you have succeeded in getting your sign-ons/off's airing, why not publicize that fact on the same station's talk show or even

the newscast? The Corps person could talk about the boating fatalities, drownings or accidents on the lake and then plug in your water safety program. You might even thank the station on the air for using the Corps' sign-on/off's. It's a nice touch and everyone loves to get a pat on the back.

What if the station rep says, "No, the station already has good ons and offs? Then, try for just one. If you have to choose, probably the sign-on would be the best since more visitors will be heading toward the water in the morning, rather than at night. Also, don't be discouraged if you get only the one sign-on or off. That's wonderful. Look at it this way: it's 100 percent more than you have now.

Is it channel flipping time at your home? Good luck.