

GovExec.com: Report finds federal researchers unsure of media rules

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0607/062107m1.htm>

By Jenny Mandel

Many federal researchers are uncertain of agency media policies and whether they can discuss the policy implications of their work, according to a new study that calls on agencies to clarify their guidelines and boost training.

In a study of media and publication policies at NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, Government Accountability Office reviewers found that only two-thirds of researchers surveyed were confident that they understood policies on media interviews and press releases well enough to comply with them. Nearly half were confused about whether they were allowed to talk about the policy implications of their research.

GAO estimated that only 6 percent -- or about 200 -- of researchers at the three agencies had been denied requests to disseminate research results during the past five years. Some were told the denial was due to the sensitivity of the issue or security concerns, while others were not given a reason. In some cases, though, the researchers were subsequently granted requests to publicize their research through an alternate route, like substituting a peer-reviewed publication for giving a talk at a conference.

GAO-07-653 Federal Research: Policies Guiding the Dissemination of Scientific Research from Selected Agencies Should be Clarified and Better Communicated, GAO-07-653, May 2007

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07653.pdf>

United States Government Accountability Office GAO Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, U. S. Senate

Background: Researchers at federal agencies disseminate their research results through a variety of approaches, including scientific publications, presentations, press releases, and media interviews. Because of recent concerns about some federal researchers possibly being restricted from disseminating their research on controversial topics, GAO determined (1) the policies that guide the dissemination of federal research at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); (2) how effectively these agencies have communicated their policies to researchers; and (3) the extent to which researchers have been restricted in disseminating their research.

Report Abstract

<http://www.gao.gov/docdblite/summary.php?rptno=GAO-07-653&accno=A69734>