

COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALIST

Job Description: Nearly all of North Dakota's larger energy companies, including utilities, coal mining operations, oil and gas companies, wind energy companies, ethanol plants, and energy trade associations, have a designated individual or group of individuals who serve as communications or public relations specialists. Public relations specialists create and maintain a favorable public image for the organization they represent.



Duties include:

- Writing press releases and preparing information for the media
- Responding to requests for information from the media and the public
- Helping their clients communicate effectively with the public
- Maintaining their organization's corporate image and identity
- Drafting speeches and arranging interviews for the organization's top executives
- Evaluating advertising and promotional programs to determine compatibility with the organization's public relations efforts

Needed Skills and Education: Important qualities for a communications/public relations specialist include strong writing and speaking skills, interpersonal relations skills, and organizational and problem-solving skills. They typically need a bachelor's degree in public relations, journalism, communications, English, or business. On-the-job training through internships and experience gained while working at a public relations or media/marketing firm is helpful in seeking professional positions.

Wages: Information on average wages for communications/public relations specialists in North Dakota was not available. Nationally, the average annual earnings is \$58,960, while the average hourly earnings is \$28.34.

Other Information: The outlook for this career path is increasing, both in North Dakota and nationally. There is hardly an organization today that does not employ information officers, not only in the private sector but in local, state, and federal government agencies. Individuals in these positions need to keep a cool head when dealing with tough questions from reporters and the public. They are the first line of defense when there is bad news facing an organization. Working hours can vary a lot depending on the organization and the timing of events and news. Social media has made these positions even more challenging because nearly anybody can post something about an organization, whether true or not, and in most, if not all cases, a response is needed.

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