

WEEK 1

Wow! I learned so much this past weekend. I was there from Saturday to Sunday, 18 hrs total, and it was quite busy!

I did a variety of tasks, such as logging tapes, calling various people (like police, fire rescue, other stations, etc.) to find out about events that occurred, monitoring the police and fire rescue dispatches, writing up reports, finding stories (from wires, websites, etc.), writing up the information into story format, helping viewers, collecting tips, etc.

It was all very exciting. My main task this past weekend was to stay up to date on all news and find breaking stories. It was so neat to listen to the police dispatches (and then call up the police station to verify the information). It was also really rewarding to know that I contributed to the news. For instance, a huge story came about from one of the tips that I received, in reference to the flooding that took place on Sunday. Also, by day two, I caught on quickly and was already looking for footage of Britney Spears, who was at Mansion night club this weekend, online before anyone even asked me for it.

Starting this weekend, I will be there for four days a week. On Saturdays and Sundays, I'm will be there from 12 pm to 9 pm, on Mondays, from 10 am to 6 pm, and on Tuesdays, from 2 pm to 9 pm.

WEEK 2

Hope you had a nice Memorial Weekend. I am writing to you in reference to what I have done the past couple days. A lot of it was much of the same, which included - answering phones, helping viewers, looking up news, verifying news, finding stories, writing up press releases, checking elements, filing papers, formulating tips into story formats, etc. I also helped write summaries of the stories for the daily log and made photocopies of important hurricane information for all reporters and photographers. In addition, I called up many places, such as hospitals and zoos, for example, to verify their contact information for hurricane purposes.

I started during the week this week (last week, I just did the weekend), and I noticed that the news room is on a much tighter schedule during the week. There are also more producers and writers and they are all keeping a close eye on what is happening. This business is fast paced and keeps you on your toes!

Some things I have observed:

1. Viewers: The viewers are quite interesting; they think we are a hotline and that we can solve all of their problems; and I truly feel bad when I can't assist them. For instance, one woman was upset at a police department for having her daughter in custody and clearly, channel seven can't do anything about that. Also, some are very demanding and want, by all means, channel seven to cover "their story." Unfortunately, they do not realize how busy a news room can be! They also like to talk for hours! Nevertheless, I do enjoy receiving their calls and their stories are entertaining. I also feel bad when we don't cover home-style like stories. For instance, students from high schools call about awards they received but, a news room is not that interested in those kinds of stories.

2. Tips: Some tips are really useful. For example, I received tips about a high school infested with rats, a town hall meeting led by Marco Rubio, and areas of flooding, to name a few. In general, some stories that we recently covered include arrests made on South Beach, rip currents, people drowning, car accidents, and buzz stories dealing with Lindsay Lohan and Estefano, a songwriter who was recently shot in Miami. In general, nothing is more exciting than seeing a story on the news that I contributed to,
3. Relationships: The relationship between news personnel and police is amazing. Often, police officers call the station to give information. Thus, maintaining good contacts and establishing relationships is vital. At times, however, they do seem annoyed when we call them. It is understandable because they are concerned with the health of the individual, while we are concerned with reporting the health of the individual.
4. Reporters: Some reporters are kind and others are rude! Let's leave it at that!

WEEK 3

The news has been gloomy this week; a woman was dragged to death, a young girl was kidnapped outside of a store, a one year old died after being hit by a car, a man died over a dispute at a carwash, a young girl killed her newborn baby, a massive fire spread by Krome, and a corrections officer was killed in a traffic accident. Because I am constantly surrounded by news, I carry these (and many other) stories with me. It makes me appreciate life so much more. In addition, I am also a lot more aware of my surroundings and find stories anywhere. As a professor once said "everyone has a story."

During the week, I answered and made calls, looked at wires, put together an ad for a hurricane rally, put together summaries of stories, logged video, etc. Lately, I've been making calls to the metro chopper to find out their destinations. When choppers are in the air, the station likes to know where they are heading to. I was also able to find some important contact information for Marco Rubio, the Speaker of the House of Florida. He has been battling with many people over property taxes. In addition, I've made calls to various weather services, such as the National Weather Service.

I did get some interesting calls from viewers. Some calls dealt with a crooked veterinarian, a police officer who shot a dog, manatees stuck in a small lake, and generators.

I was able to shadow a reporter on Monday. Her name is Vanessa Ruiz and she has been working with seven since 2004. We went over to a warehouse and covered a story dealing with a government auction. She gave me some very useful tips. For instance, she told me to keep "on camera" interviews short because it makes for easy editing later. She said that some reporters ask too many questions instead of just getting to the point. She also said that she often approaches people in the spur of the moment and never really methodically thinks of what she needs to get beforehand. She has a good point because the people should tell the story. Also, I was surprised to see that her photographer does all the editing and picks the pictures. In school, we learned that reporters should be the ones to pick the pictures and do their own editing. I suppose that it depends on the station.

Finally, one of the major things I've noticed is that local stations really don't allow reporters to pick their own stories. Instead, producers and assignment reporters assign them.

WEEK 4

I was able to go out with a reporter again this week. It was really exciting because I saw the whole evolution of the story. I was at the assignment desk when I received a tip about three gators that were caught in the canals of Miami Springs. Then my supervisor told me to go with one of the reporters and cover the story. I ended up staying with the reporter for most of the day as she prepared a voice over, then votsot, and finally, a package for the story. As she was preparing the story and interviewing, I also wrote down a standup. In addition, her photographer allowed me to do some practice stand ups in front of the camera and they both gave me critiques. I was so grateful for their advice. They both told me that I was on the right track and that they could see me as a reporter, but they also gave me some helpful tips and told me areas I could improve in.

Each week, I become more comfortable in the newsroom. I also learned a new task this week. I sat in the feedbay area for a little while and learned how to take feeds in and how to feed video out.

I also received an official tour of the station. One of the producers is going to let me sit in the control room during one of the shows (hopefully tomorrow) so that will be nice.

As usual, in the assignment desk area, I made calls/ answered calls, looked up stories, helped with summaries, cued some video, etc.

Some stories this week dealt with a cement truck accident, a capsized boat, a one year old drowning, an accident at the airport, Anna Nicole's child, and of course, Paris Hilton. Because ratings are highest when entertainment news is covered, stations are making sure to provide many of these kinds of stories.

WEEK 5

I have had a very productive week. Last Saturday, I was able to go into the control room and watch the show from there. While I understood most of the terminology and have been in a control room before, the experience was like no other especially since so many changes were being made to the program while the show was on air. At the last minute, because of horrible rain and lightning, they were unable to get two packages in so they had to fill in the time with stories from their webcast, etc.

On Sunday, I hung out with the editors for most of the day. It was a really fun experience and I got to do some of my own editing and had it critiqued. The main editor told me that I did very well.

I also learned how to look up videos from pathfinder and ipump, two websites that provide videos, packages, etc. for a fee. I was surprised to see that reporters can take packages from these websites and retrack them with their own voices.

I was also able to hang out with the vtr operators downstairs. Interestingly, they are in a separate room from the control room.

At the assignment desk, I found stories, summarized press releases, made calls, etc. I was able to get some really interesting stories from some of our sister stations in Florida. I called them up and learned, for example, about a youtube video that showed an eagle ray being tortured to death. Some other stories dealt with ten driving commandments given out by the Vatican, Raul Castro's wife dying, and an atv accident. In addition, a viewer called in about a fundraising accident that was paying tribute to a South Floridian who had died a few months ago in a plane crash.

WEEK 6

The producers taught me all the terminology on a rundown. While I knew what a rundown was, I now have a better understanding of it. For example, a "bug" is simply a little logo or graphic on the side of the tv screen during a package.

I wrote some voice overs and had a writer look over them. She gave me some helpful advice. Channel 7 has a unique style of writing. For instance, they don't put any "helping verbs" in their sentences.

I also practiced some editing, checked out the art department, and went to the control room again.

I spent a day with a photographer aka cameraman and learned a great deal. Photographers typically cruise around various areas until a breaking story comes along. Because we went without a reporter, I was able to act as the reporter and conducted some quick interviews. We went to several locations and shot some video, but the most memorable was a story that happened toward the end of the night. A young male (around 19 years old) had drowned in a lake in North Miami Dade. He was swimming there by himself when someone noticed him calling for help. When we got to the location, fire rescue was searching the lake for about forty five minutes, but didn't find him. It began to rain and they called off the search. We stayed a while longer. Police then showed up and looked for the victim. They found him about twenty minutes later. I saw it all, the body being removed from the lake and the family identifying the boy. It was a very sad occasion and of course, a reality that comes with the job.

As usual, I was also at the assignment desk. Some stories dealt with a rape, a shooting, a fire, and a documentary about child slavery in the Dominican Republic. Also, Hilton was released from jail and the body of the pregnant woman from Ohio was found.

WEEK 7

Last Saturday, I went out with a photographer to Miami International Airport. I was able to take on the role as reporter and interviewed passengers that departed from London flights. I was to ask them how they felt about all the terrorist attacks that have taken place in London and Scotland. It was great practice.

Other than that, I spent my time at the assignment desk, answering calls, finding stories, calling police, etc.

I was also able to spend an hour in the studio during a newscast and shadowed one of the cameramen. It was a lot of fun.

Some stories of interest during the past week dealt with the terrorist attacks, a snake bite, wildfires, and of course, stories related to the Fourth of July.

Last Saturday, I went out with a reporter and photographer. We covered a story dealing with a baby that was found in a trash can. Unfortunately, it died. After much investigation, it turns out that it was a homicide. A woman of the house, where the trash can was found at, gave birth to the child and placed it in the trash. As usual, I practiced a couple of standups.

I was also able to go out with another reporter on Tuesday. His name is Dave Kartunen and he is incredible at his job. We covered the story dealing with the new National Hurricane Center Director. Kartunen is an excellent writer and gave useful advice when it comes to writing packages.

The rest of the time, I was at the assignment desk. There, I looked up stories, made calls to police, helped/spoke to viewers, typed up releases, received tips, etc.

Some stories of interest dealt with rain and lightning, 7/7/07 stories, two puppies that were shot by a cop, a heat wave, and Harry Potter frenzy.

Week 8

Tuesday was my last day. On Saturday, I went out again with a reporter and we covered a car chase and the death of a young grandfather.

Granddad story: A man was sitting in his living room with his grandson when someone started shooting bullets toward the house. He went to grab his grandson and got shot. The man died. The family was very sad, but also opened their doors to the media and answered questions. It was a horrible situation, but they truly believe he saved the grandson's life. We were able to interview some family members and neighbors. No one knows who did it.

As said, the other story dealt with a chase. Police chased a car full of armed robbers in Ft. Lauderdale and the chase ended when the robbers crashed into a pole. Many people came out to stare at the scene and the reporter, Vanessa Ruiz, let me do all the questioning. The robbers are in police custody.

The rest of my time at the station, I stayed at the assignment desk and did the usual task of finding/verifying stories.

Everyone at the station was very kind and I'm so grateful to have been there. I am picking up my evaluation tomorrow and will see you on Monday.