

Seattle Times accuracy verification guidelines

Statement of responsibility

Any staff member who generates content for The Seattle Times is responsible for the accuracy of that content. The person primarily responsible for gathering the information (reporter, photographer, researcher, graphic artist or editor) must take every reasonable step to verify the accuracy of information before submitting it for publication. The responsibility to verify information as part of the reporting process has always been a fundamental tenet of journalism. That becomes even more imperative in the age of the Internet, when reports go directly from reporter to seattletimes.com, without the usual editing backstops. Editors should randomly but regularly double-check information and ask news gatherers what was done to verify their report.

CQ policy

Factual information that is deemed especially crucial to the credibility of our report or that, if incorrect, could cause particular confusion or inconvenience to the public or harm to the subject of a published report, bears a special burden of accuracy. To that end, the following information must be CQd by the primary reporter (or photographer, researcher, graphic artist or editor) as a formal statement of verification. If the information is verified by someone else, the CQ should include that person's name.

- Phone numbers (verified by calling from final text file, not notes, press releases or story drafts)
- Website addresses (logged on from final text file)
- Times and dates (include date in notes mode next to a day reference)
- Unusual, variable, unfamiliar or hyphenated name spellings (e.g., Michele/Michelle, Marion/Marian, Jon. de Leon, Banaszynski, Matassa Flores). Don't assume you know the spelling of a common name or just ask another staffer. Look it up.
- Mathematical conclusions or terms (ex: percent/percentile, median/average)

In addition, news gatherers should double-check the following information:

- Numbers
- Titles
- Institutional names and acronyms

Verification tips

- Keep a checklist posted of information to be regularly double-checked
- Double-check information through a secondary source whenever possible
- Don't assume officials, reports or press releases have provided accurate information
- Spell names back using some form of letter sounds (ex: Apple, Boy, Charlie)
- Have a primary source/subject print their name in your notebook