

Procedures for ensuring the integrity of the contest

The success and value of the Virginia Press Association's contest depends on the integrity of the member publications and their staffs. Submissions to the contests must reflect the work that was delivered to the publication's readers and subscribers. Our customers are the ultimate judges of our efforts.

A. The use of print-outs vs. clippings or tearsheets in contests

1. Writing entries will be accepted if submitted as clippings, photocopies of clippings, print-outs of pages, full-page tearsheets, PDFs or print-outs from archive systems or other electronic storage.
2. All writing entries, regardless of the form of entry, are required to be exactly as published in the entering publication, including headlines and bylines. Other elements of display type, such as quote blocks, at-a-glance boxes and pull-outs, may be included but are not required. Jumplines and jump headlines are not required on print-outs from electronic storage. No editing, either of content or length, is allowed.
3. Writing entries submitted as print-outs from an electronic storage system may be reflowed for ease of reading, but all parts of the content, including the headlines, must duplicate the published version.
4. All writing entries must include copies of published corrections, clarifications or corrections related to the entry.
5. Photo entries will be accepted as clippings only.
6. Artwork entries will be accepted as clippings only.
7. Presentation entries in the page-design categories will be accepted as tearsheets or full copies of sections only.
8. Presentation entries in the headline-writing category will be accepted as clippings or photocopies of clippings only.

Certification of individual entries

Each entry in the writing, artwork, photography and presentation categories will require the signatures of two members of the newsroom staff. The certification will read:

We hereby affirm that we have taken reasonable steps to ensure:

1. *That the attached entry represents the original efforts of the entrant(s) named thereon.*
2. *That the entrants are eligible to participate in this contest.*
3. *That each piece of work in the attached entry is presented exactly as published and there has been no post-publication editing, correction, enhancement, deletion or other modification of the content.*
4. *That all published corrections, clarifications and retractions have been included as part of the entry package.*

Signatures on the entry form

Signature	Preferred signer	Acceptable signer
First	The writer, editor, artist or photographer who originally created the work in the entry. If more than one person is involved in the entry, only one is expected to sign.	A manager, supervisor, team leader or editor to whom the creator of the work reports.
Second	The manager, supervisor, team leader or editor to whom the creator of the work reports.	A manager, supervisor, team leader, editor or other responsible staff member designated by the publication's chief news executive. In small publications, the second signer may be a peer or subordinate if the creator is the chief news executive of the publication.

Each publication will submit one summary form that lists all of the publication's entries. This form will include an additional certification, which will read:

I hereby affirm that I have taken reasonable steps to ensure:

1. *That these entries are submitted as published and there has been no post-publication editing, correction, enhancement, deletion or other modification of the content.*
2. *That the creators of the work in these entries are eligible to participate in this contest.*

Signature on the summary form

Signature	Preferred signer	Acceptable signer
First and only	Publisher or chief news executive	No options

B. Assuring the security of entries in the contest

1. The VPA staff will continue to perform the initial tasks of receiving, opening, logging and category-by-category sorting of entries.
2. Members of the news awards committee will check all entries for correct category, form of entry and security of entry.
 - a. Two members of the news awards committee, from separate ownerships and working independently, will check each category group.
 - b. Each category group will be checked against a manifest produced from the entry database.
3. Discrepancies between the manifest and the actual category group will be noted on the manifest and recorded in the database.
 - a. Problems with entries will be resolved by the committee and the committee chair in telephone consultation with the submitting publication.
 - b. All problem resolutions and disqualifications will be noted on the manifest and recorded in the database.
4. Disqualified entries will be retained at the VPA office until 30 days after the winter meeting.
5. Upon completion of the sorting and updating of the database, new copies of the category manifests will be printed and placed in the category envelopes with the entries.
6. The category envelopes will be sealed with tape before shipping to the judging state.
7. Entry reports will be produced and e-mailed to each participating publication. This report will note discrepancies between the summary sheet submitted by the publication and what was found at sorting, including disqualifications, reclassifications and bumps to higher circulation groups.
8. Category groups will be assigned to judges based on the size and frequency of their home publication and their own skills and experience.
9. Judges will be instructed to inspect their category groups before beginning their judging.
 - a. Judges will check the contents of the category envelope against the category manifest.
 - b. Judges will check off each entry on the manifest as it is judged.
10. If a judge asks a committee member a question relating to an entry from the member's publication, the member will refer the question to another committee member or the VPA staff.
11. Judges will be asked to pick up to three winners in each category, depending on the number of entries.

- a. Judges will be asked to provide comments on up to three winners.
 - b. Judges will be asked to designate one alternate winner, without comments.
 - c. In the event of a disqualification after judging, the remaining winners and the alternate shall be used to fill out the category's awards. In the event of a disqualification after awards are presented, the alternate will not be elevated.
12. Discrepancies, including reclassifications and disqualifications, occurring during the judging will be logged in the database.
 13. Winning entries will be marked with a stamp or hard-to-remove seal before they are shipped back to Virginia. This marking will reduce the likelihood that someone could remove an altered (but undetected) entry from the winners' display and replace it with an unaltered copy.
 14. Judges' handwritten report forms and the checklist manifests will be retained by VPA for at least one year after the judging.
 15. Winning entries will be retained by VPA for at least one year after the judging.

C. Verification of the integrity of writing winners

1. Award notification letters will be sent via e-mail to all winning publications within 48 hours of the completion of the judging.
2. A group of winning entries will be selected at random for verification.
 - a. Letters identifying the selected entries will be sent via e-mail to the publications within 72 hours of the completion of the judging.
 - b. The letters will request full-page tearsheets of the selected entries for comparison to the copy submitted for judging.
 - i. Verification copies are due at the VPA office within one week.
 - ii. If full-page tearsheets are not available, the committee will accept a photocopy of the publication's stickfile copy bound volume or microfilm, certified by the librarian or the chief news executive. The committee has the flexibility to accept other forms of verification, if necessary.
 - iii. If a tearsheet or certified copy is not received by the prescribed deadline, the award will be **forfeited**.
 - iv. Comparison of the submitted entry to the verification copy will be performed by committee members and the VPA staff.

D. Penalties for submitting entries not identical to the published version

1. If discrepancies between a submitted version and a published version are discovered, the committee will require the publication to submit verification copies of all entries (before judging) or all winning entries (after judging). The action taken will depend upon the extent of the discrepancies, but may include one or more of the following:
 - a. Disqualification of the offending entries.
 - b. Disqualification of all entries submitted by the offending publication in the affected contest division (writing, photography/graphics, news presentation, special or public/service).
 - c. Disqualification of all entries submitted by the offending publication.

- d. Forfeiture of entry fees for the disqualified entries.
 - e. Letter from VPA president to publisher of the offending publication.
2. When discrepancies are discovered, the news awards committee will determine the extent of the discrepancies and whether the differences were intentional and whether they were substantive.
 3. Appeals may be made to the VPA board of directors. The board will review all of the available evidence and make a binding decision.