

A look at how TV news is produced.

Narrator: Have you ever wondered how the news gets produced? There's a lot more involved than you might think. For people who are watching, it appears simple. But it's always a challenge to complete a news show. Here at KMSP-TV, we're going to see how the evening news, or newscast as it is commonly called, is produced, by talking to some of the people who make it happen. Let's start with the associate news director, Alan Beck. The associate news director, who is often an experienced journalist, is the person that's in charge of daily operations. He says he's also the person who has to exercise good news judgment.

Alan Beck,
Associate News

Director: I decide what stories we cover, what reporters are assigned to what stories, how much time and resource we will devote to a particular story. It's really more of a team effort than I think most people realize. We are consulting with each other all the time.

Narrator: After decisions are made on what news stories have to be covered, the focus is on the assignment editor, Keith Brown. He is the team member that decides where the photographers and reporters will go.

Keith Brown,

Assignment Editor: Uh, my job is to . . . uh . . . to gather all the information story ideas from the public, from our reporters, from wire services. Then I will decide what crews to assign to it – what reporters, what photographers.

Narrator: The reporter is the person that gets the information and writes the script for the story. The photographer is the one who shoots the pictures and gets the sound to go along with the story. Rod Wermager is a news photographer here at Channel 9.

Rod Wermager,

Photographer: It's . . . It's kind of a collaboration between me and . . . and the reporter in terms of the video that needs to be shot, how it needs to be shot.

Narrator: Vince Irby is the other half of the team.
Vince Irby,

Reporter: The reporter is the person who comes in at the beginning of the day, discusses possible story ideas with an assignment editor, with a producer, . . . uh . . . and then basically gets on the phone and he starts making calls to set up that story, or goes right out to the scene.

Rod Wermager: Once we get everything documented on tape, we bring it back here to the station . . . uh . . . where the reporter will then grab the tapes, look at the pictures I've got, look at his sound bites, pick out sound bites he wants to use in his news story. He gets the script done. Uh, he cuts the audio track.

Narrator: The photographer, who is also a video editor, then takes the soundtrack and the videotape and edits them into a finished news story.

Vince Irby: Rod puts it together. And it's . . . it's really magical how it all comes together.

Narrator: So what happens after the stories for the nightly news show are edited together? Let's meet the news show's producer, Carrie Hoerrmann.

Carrie Hoerrmann,

Producer: The producer is the person who is sort of the manager of the newscast – the boss of the newscast. I decide what stories go into the newscast, what order, how much time to give each story. With the use of the computer, I wipe out the previous day's rundown and start over – clean slate.

Narrator: The producer is like a newspaper editor. She selects which stories to include in the newscast and in what order. She proofreads and edits the stories, and she decides how they will be presented: by the anchor on camera or with graphics.

Carrie Hoerrmann: About an hour before the newscast, we want ninety percent of the newscast written. Then we print it.

Narrator: During the newscast, the producer sits in the control room to make sure the script is being followed. But in the control room, the director is in charge.

Leo Hofmeister,

Director: The director is a person who gets the script from a producer and coordinates all the efforts of the technical staff to get a newscast on the air.

Narrator: The staff in the control room includes an assistant director, an audio person, a technical person, an assistant to the technical person, and a graphic artist. The director is also responsible for telling the news anchors which camera to look at and for telling the camera operators what angles and shots he wants them to get.

Leo Hofmeister: One of the most exciting things about my job in TV news is that it's live. There is absolutely no opportunity to have retakes, so if I make a mistake here, it's something that you're going to see at home.

Narrator: The anchors are the people viewers see delivering the news. At this station, there are two: a man and a woman. Robyne Robinson is one of the anchors.

Robyne Robinson,

Anchor: Every anchor's job is different. But what we usually do every day is we try to read as much as we can, listen to as much radio as we can . . . uh . . . watch as much news on the other stations and on the network news as possible. We take that information, and we write scripts all day long with the help of writers and producers and the reporters and photographers.

Narrator: After the preparation, Robyne and her co-anchor are the ones who deliver the news to the public.

Jeff Passolt,

Anchor: It wouldn't be the Minnesota State Fair without Princess Kay of the Milky Way.

Robyne Robinson: And tonight the decision has been made. Who is going to reign over the fair as Princess Kay? Well, Vince Irby is live at the fairgrounds with the contest and more on the winner.

Vince Irby: Brigitte Hollerman just took the stage. She just took the crown. And we're going to do a pan-over and see if we can see her. She is being embraced and hugged by her friends. She just took that on live TV. You saw it here about two minutes ago. She's twenty years old. She's from Farwell, Minnesota –

Robyne Robinson: Ninety-nine percent of the stories are pre-scripted, but we like to add a little of our own personality to it. So we may ad-lib just a little bit. And there's always the cross talk between anchors that's not scripted. Some nights it's perfect, wonderful, flawless, no mistakes. Some nights it's a circus, and things go wrong: and the TelePrompter® doesn't work, and you go from one camera to the next and it's the wrong camera and you're looking the wrong way, or you just stumble all over yourself. But that's what makes it fun. You know, every night is different. It's live.

Narrator: It's eleven o'clock. The newscast is over, and it's time to go home. Tomorrow the members of the news team will return once more to start the process all over again. The associate director will decide what stories to follow. The assignment editor will gather the story ideas and assign reporters and photographers to cover them. The photographers and reporters will gather the pictures, sound, and information they need to tell a news story. The producer will create a script for the newscast by deciding which stories will be included, how they'll be presented, and in what order. Following the producer's script, the director will tell the technical staff what to do to get the newscast on the air. Finally, the anchors will deliver the news. And that's how it works every day behind the scenes in TV news.