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NYT freelancers asked to fill out questionnaire

4/10/2006 1:00:53 PM

Memo sent to New York Times staffers

To the Newsroom:

Nearly three years ago, the Siegal Committee recommended that The Times learn more about its stringers and freelancers, to ensure that their ethical standards and credentials are equal to those of our regular staff. It has taken some time to develop electronic tools to put this recommendation into practice, but we are now ready to do so.

Effective on Monday, April 10, all of our freelance writers will be asked to fill out a questionnaire about their affiliations, work history, financial and personal connections and any past instances when questions were raised about the accuracy or originality of their work.

The questionnaire, which each freelancer will submit via the special Web site we have established for the new freelance assignment and payment system, will be reviewed by senior editors in the department for which the freelancer works. On the basis of the information submitted, the editors will determine what future assignments are appropriate for the stringer or freelancer.

Just as we have required signed contracts in recent years as a prerequisite for freelance work, we will now also require submission of the questionnaire. And just as we have required editors to verify that a freelancer has signed a contract before assigning work to that freelancer, we will also require editors to verify that the freelancer has been vetted. Both checks can be made using the new freelancer assignment and payment system.

This policy applies to freelance writers only, not to illustrators or photographers. In departments that are not yet using the new freelance payment system, the vetting requirement will go into effect when the new system is adopted.

Your desk administrators have been given detailed information about how the vetting system works. Please check with them for instructions.

If you have any questions about this policy, please e-mail Al Siegal, Craig Whitney or Nancy Sharkey. For technical help with the system, please e-mail James Wilkerson in News Technology.

thanks,
Al Siegal and Craig Whitney

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Photos by Jim Steen

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Adopted: When It Fits, When It Doesn't, and Why

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Al's Tuesday Meeting

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