



When Fire Strikes:

Get Out! Stay Out!

Tips and Tools to Get Media Coverage
for Your Fire Prevention Week Program

Dear Fire Professional,

Thank you for requesting *Tips & Tools*, Syndistar's free guide to planning your Fire Prevention Week promotions. This resource guide will assist you in making the most of your Fire Prevention Week outreach. From securing media coverage to encouraging community involvement, this guide has the suggestions, tools, and sample materials to ensure your success.

Syndistar, Inc. has been a proud partner in Fire Prevention since 1979 and we look forward to providing high quality, effective materials that help you keep your community safe for many years to come. This year's Fire Prevention Week theme package: ***When Fire Strikes: Get Out! Stay Out!*** and our full line of fire prevention materials are available to assist you in implementing your Fire Prevention Week campaign. Our products are available for pre-view for purchase consideration and may also be seen on our web site, www.syndistar.com/fire.

For more information about this guide or the complete line of Syndistar Fire Prevention Products, please do not hesitate to give us a call at 1-800-841-9532.

Yours in fire prevention,

Syndistar, Inc.



Greg Fox, Jr.

VP & General Manager

Tips and Tools to Get Media Coverage for Your Fire Prevention Week Program

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1. INTRODUCTION – Using This Guide

A good marketing campaign will lend greatly to the success of your Fire Prevention Week program. Advertising in newspapers or on the radio, giving away personalized novelty items with the “When Fire Strikes: Get Out! Stay Out!” slogan, and catching the interest of the local media are all avenues to reach your intended audience.

Whether the word “marketing” seems like a foreign language, or you’ve had experience working with the media and running a marketing campaign, this guide will give you the help you need.

Treat the first section as a blueprint for developing the scope of your campaign. Ask yourself, “How does this apply to what I’m trying to do?” and make notes as you read along.

The second section gives you templates to work from, as well as advice for adding those extra bits of polish that can make a lasting impression for your Fire Prevention Week efforts.

You may choose to use specific pieces of information from the guide, or you may want to go the full-blown marketing-blitz route and do everything. But even doing just one or two marketing initiatives correctly can build momentum for your program.

Best of Luck!

2. PROMOTING YOUR FIRE PREVENTION WEEK PROGRAM – General Advice

Establish a Marketing Campaign

Designate specific time, persons, and dollars for each marketing activity. Remember, all successful ventures promote their “product.” Try to include printed advertisements, public speaking, and any or all available media. It is very helpful to enlist volunteers who have experience in public relations and development, or ask an agency for the donation of their assistance.

State Benefits for All Groups

Highlight realistic and important benefits for each audience. Be mindful of the reading level, style, format, and appeal of the message. Be particularly sensitive to the language (English, Spanish), vocabulary, jargon, and syntax used by your respective audiences.

State What Each Group Can Do to Help

State the ways in which each group can contribute. Publicity materials should be designed for each segment of your market – students, parents, business owners, home owners, and community organizations. By explaining how each group can contribute their time and talents to the Fire Prevention Week effort you will empower the community and solicit their involvement. You may choose to appoint a volunteer coordinator to organize and maintain communication with these groups.

Develop a Mailing List

Develop a network mailing list. Include all partners and appropriate administrators (your supervisors) on your publicity distribution list so they always see what is going out to the various audiences. Be sure they are informed in advance of anything significant released to the media. It may be helpful to delegate the duty of compiling the mailing list.

Network

Use the power of personal contact: Invite potential partners to review the program. Encourage them to help promote the program through word of mouth or make presentations to others in their respective business and professional circles.

Market Your Success

The following materials and techniques will help promote your Fire Prevention Week program:

- Fliers and brochures mailed and distributed
- Posters in community centers, schools, and public transportation
- Public service announcements on radio and television
- Open houses of facilities and personnel
- Presentations to civic, community, and professional groups
- Newspaper ads and articles
- Bumper stickers, T-shirts, or other novelty items
- Program newsletters
- Involvement in other local organizations and community activities

The media can greatly affect the success of your program. If they understand and publicize Fire Prevention Week as a beneficial project, you will gain support and participation. If they misunderstand and misrepresent your program, it may lose support. If they never hear of your program and don't cover it, you may never know how well you could have done. The media will greatly respect you and your program if you show you understand their ways. What follows is an explanation of ways you can work with the media, and when and how to use different approaches.

3. TOOLS FOR PROMOTING YOUR FIRE PREVENTION WEEK PROGRAM

MEDIA ADVISORY

Purpose – A media or news advisory is used to alert editors and reporters to specific events or activities that your community may be planning around Fire Prevention Week. The media advisory should explain the “who, what, when, where, why, and how” of these events and should provide just enough information to entice media to attend.

Note: Media advisories should not be confused with news releases. Advisories are meant to persuade reporters to cover an activity before it happens. Remember, you want the media to attend your events so that you gain exposure and reporters get the whole story. If you give them all the information in the advisory, they can easily write the story from their desks.

How to Use – Send advisories to your state and local media lists. If you do not have a specific name, address advisories to the “Assignment Editor” at television stations, the “News Director” at radio stations, and the “City Editor” at newspapers. Also, make sure to send an advisory to state and local wire services for inclusion in their “daybook” listing of events scheduled that day.

If you know that reporters or news organizations are not likely to attend your event – because of time limitations or other reasons – send an advisory anyway. They may want to schedule a one-on-one interview or contact a wire service to cover the event for them.

Timing – Because an advisory sent too far in advance may get lost in the shuffle, mail advisories at least three to five days in advance but no more than a week, unless holidays will interfere with the timing. If you don’t have this lead time, hand deliver or fax the advisory to local media no later than the morning of the day before the event.

Format – A media advisory should:

- Have a brief headline describing the event.
- Have the words “MEDIA ADVISORY” at the top left corner of the page.
- State the date of release, usually the day it is to be mailed.
- Provide your contact names and phone numbers.
- Visually highlight the date, time, and place that the news event will occur.
- Give a brief description of the purpose of the event and what will take place, such as a list of key speakers, and be sure to underscore any strong visual aspects so media decision makers will know if it would be wise to send a photographer or camera crew.
- Be no longer than one page as a rule of thumb.
- Indicate the end of the page by using the universal end-symbols recognized by news organizations: “- 30 -” or “###.”

SAMPLE



MEDIA ADVISORY – September 30, 2003

CONTACT:

Jane Smith
Office of the Fire Marshal
Walla Walla, WA
(555) 555-5555

PRESENTATION KICKS OFF FIRE PREVENTION WEEK, MONDAY AT 6:00 PM

WALLA WALLA, September 30 – Fire Marshal Jane Smith will be speaking at the Town Library on Monday, October 5th at 6:00 p.m. to introduce this year's Fire Prevention Week theme, "When Fire Strikes: Get Out! Stay Out!"

Refreshments will be served and children in attendance will receive free "When Fire Strikes: Get Out! Stay Out!" stickers.

WHO: Jane Smith of the Walla Walla Fire Marshal's Office

WHEN: Monday, October 5th, 2003 at 6:00 p.m.

WHERE: Town Library, 2nd Floor
11 Main Street
Walla Walla, WA 99999

NEWS RELEASE

Purpose – A news release summarizes and presents important stories for the media. The release should frame your message accurately and provide background information and quotes from reputable and knowledgeable spokespeople. A news release helps to make a reporter's job easier, which in turn benefits your efforts.

How to Use – The news release should be the key component of any media kit or information packet. It should be written with the most important information in the first and second paragraphs. Less important points and expansion of overall issues should be included in later paragraphs. News releases should be targeted to specific reporters or to the assignment or city editor for distribution to the appropriate reporter.

Timing – Most news releases can be distributed at your events. This keeps you in control of the "news" until you are ready to release it. If reporters cannot attend your event, be sure you distribute the release to them in a timely fashion – the same day if possible.

Some information will take reporters longer to review and interpret. In these instances, send a release with more lead time and "EMBARGO" the information. An "EMBARGO" means that a reporter can read the information but cannot make it public until the date noted. The terminology to use is: "Hold For Release – Embargoed until July 4, 1994 at 10:00 A.M. ET." This ethically binds the media to your restrictions.

Format – The news release should:

- Be typed on 8-1/2" x 11" letterhead.
- Have wide margins to allow for editor's notes.
- Generally be double-spaced, one-sided, and no longer than 3-4 pages.
- Have a brief headline describing the story.
- Highlight the release date and provide contact names and phone numbers.
- Indicate page continuation by placing the word "more" in parenthesis at the bottom.
- Identify continuing pages with a one-word descriptor followed by dashes and the page number.
- Identify the end by placing a "- 30 -" or "###."

Additional Hints – In writing a news release:

- Use short sentences and paragraphs.
- Make certain that facts are absolutely accurate.
- Check for proper spelling of names and places.
- Avoid jargon and technical terms or explain them if they must be used.
- Don't use initials without indicating what they stand for in the first reference.
- Write factually and objectively – avoid editorializing and using adjectives.
- Insert pertinent quotes from local officials, specific examples, and anecdotes.
- Obtain a "style book" from local bookstores for guidance on punctuation, proper usage, abbreviations, grammar, etc.

SAMPLE



September 21st, 2003

CONTACT:

Jane Smith
Office of the Fire Marshal
Walla Walla, WA
(555) 555-5555

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK KICKS OFF MONDAY, OCTOBER 5TH

WALLA WALLA, September 21st – The Walla Walla Fire Marshal's Office announced their schedule of fire safety presentations today for the 2003 Fire Prevention Week campaign. Fire Marshal Jane Smith will be making the opening presentation at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, October 5th in the Town Library.

This year's Fire Prevention Week theme is "When Fire Strikes: Get Out! Stay Out!" Smith says they have scheduled presentations in all four area elementary schools, as well as in 11 different communities, making it one their most successful Fire Prevention Weeks to date.

"The message of this year's theme is simple: Get out of the house as quickly and safely as possible, and never go back inside a burning building," said Smith. "We are excited that so many people in the community have taken an interest in participating."

Presentations will be made with age-appropriate materials, Smith said, using one DVD specifically for children and another for adults. Children will be given an activity book that certifies them as a "Fire Safe Friend" upon completion, while adults will be given pamphlets with additional safety tips. Novelty items such as fire hats, drinking cups, stickers, and rub-off tattoos will be embossed with the "Get Out! Stay Out!" message.

"The DVDs are geared to hold the attention of the viewing audience and teach them important fire safety concepts. The written materials and other items will serve to reinforce those lessons beyond the presentation," said Smith.

An event schedule follows. For more details, contact the Walla Walla Fire Marshal's Office at (555) 555-5555.

(more)

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EVENT SCHEDULE:

Monday, October 5th at 6:00 p.m.
Town Library
11 Main Street

Tuesday, October 6th at 9:30 a.m.
West Walla Walla Elementary school
14 Evergreen Terrace

Tuesday, October 6th at 7:00 p.m.
West Walla Walla Grange Hall
23 Skidoo Street

Tuesday, October 6th at 7:00 p.m.
East Walla Walla Country Club
96 Country Club Drive

Thursday, October 8th at 1:00 p.m.
East Walla Walla Elementary School
17 Mulholland Drive

(continue listing events in this manner.)

- 30 -

FACT SHEET

Purpose – A fact sheet provides media with additional information to flesh out their story. Information on a fact sheet can include background about your organization's mission, its history, biographies, or relevant local and national statistics.

Include this document with your press release when you mail to local media, and have ready to hand out at any public events.

Format – On your organization's stationary, create concise blocks of information. Don't go more than one or two pages at most. Use brief headers to separate types of information.

SAMPLE



Office of the Fire Marshal
Walla Walla, WA
(555) 555-5555

About the Office of the Fire Marshal

Established in 1967, the publicly-funded Office of the Fire Marshal has educated communities in the Walla Walla area about the risks of fire, and the best methods for prevention and protection.

Fire Facts and Statistics

- Each year, fire kills more Americans than all natural disasters combined.
- Direct property loss due to fires is estimated at \$8.6 billion each year.
- It is estimated that over 40 percent of residential fires and three-fifths of residential fatalities occur in homes with no smoke alarms.
- Children under the age of 10 accounted for an estimated 17 percent of all fire deaths in 1996.
- Careless smoking is the leading cause of fire deaths. Smoke alarms and smolder-resistant bedding and upholstered furniture are significant fire deterrents.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Purpose – Free air time for public service announcements (PSAs) is available on television and radio to community organizations. These messages must contain noncommercial information that is beneficial to the community. Because stations receive a license to use the public airways, they are required by law to carry public service programming and messages. Controversial, political, or self-serving messages are not considered a public service. For a PSA to be accepted for broadcast, it should stress a call to action.

Public service announcements are not a replacement for paid advertising. Radio and TV stations will base their decision to use a PSA on whether or not the message is truly of service to the public.

How to Use – Before launching a PSA campaign, contact public service directors at individual stations and arrange to meet with them personally to learn more about their guidelines on PSA acceptance. These people are valuable station contacts and might be interested in joining your Fire Prevention Week campaign.

Format – Determine what their format requirements are for PSAs, and ask if they are willing to help produce the spots. Radio stations will either use cassettes, reel-to-reels, or scripts. It is a good idea to include the written scripts, even if not requested. Television stations usually use three-quarter- or one-inch tapes and will rarely take the time to produce their own from your written scripts.

Both radio and television PSAs are produced in varying lengths:

- 10 seconds (approximately 25 words)
- 30 seconds (approximately 75 words)
- 60 seconds (approximately 150 words)

When writing public service announcements, keep the following in mind:

- Write short, upbeat sentences.
- Issue a “call for action.”
- Tell the audience to contact your organization for more information. Use a telephone number only if your office can handle a volume of incoming calls in the early morning or evening hours.

PSAs should be mailed to a target list of stations along with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the PSAs, their length, and any other information to encourage usage.

Follow-up – To monitor PSA usage, include a “reply card” which stations can send back to indicate if, when, and how often the PSAs were used. The reply card can be simply laid out on a personal computer, or even handwritten on index cards. Design it to resemble a magazine business reply card and pre-stamp it if your budget permits.

Have a volunteer make a round of calls a few weeks after the PSAs are distributed to make sure they arrived. Ask when the station plans to air the messages. Let them know that in your publicity efforts to announce the public service advertising campaign, you would like to provide people with information on when to tune in to the station to see or hear the spots – a trick that often secures better placement for your messages.

SAMPLE

Walla Walla Fire Marshal's Office
19 Court Street
Walla Walla, WA 99999



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Released: Monday, September 28th

Kill Date: October 11th, 2003 (this is the date for the announcement to end)

Contact: Jane Smith/(555) 555-5555/firemar@wwfm.org

Fire Prevention Week Begins October 5th :30

(Body copy typed in capital letters:)

WHEN FIRE STRIKES, WILL YOU BE READY? PLEASE JOIN FIRE MARSHAL JANE SMITH NEXT MONDAY AT AN OPEN HOUSE TO KICK OFF FIRE PREVENTION WEEK. THIS YEAR'S THEME IS "WHEN FIRE STRIKES: GET OUT! STAY OUT!"

REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED AND KIDS WILL GET FREE STICKERS. IT ALL STARTS AT 6:00 PM NEXT MONDAY, OCTOBER 5TH, ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF THE TOWN LIBRARY AT 11 MAIN STREET.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL 555-5555.

Fire Prevention Week Begins October 5th :15

JOIN FIRE MARSHAL JANE SMITH FOR A FIRE PREVENTION WEEK OPEN HOUSE NEXT MONDAY AT 6:00 PM., ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF THE TOWN LIBRARY AT 11 MAIN STREET.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 555-5555

NEWS CONFERENCE

Purpose – News conferences are used to convene media to announce the launch of your Fire Prevention Week campaign. This is what is known as a “proactive” news conference.

Timing – Schedule the news conference to coordinate with media deadlines. Generally, the event should be held between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. The best days of the week to hold a news conference are Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. Fridays tend to be poor news days because your story will most likely appear in Saturday’s paper, which has a lower circulation. Because of the weekend, Mondays do not allow for last-minute notification of reporters.

Notification – When you arrange a news conference, send out a media advisory to the appropriate reporters, editors, and columnists. Make follow-up calls at least two days before the event to encourage attendance. This also will help you determine the size of your event.

Site Preparation and Logistics – Site arrangements are a crucial part of a successful news conference.

- Select a location that is convenient for the media or one that provides strong opportunities for visuals.
- Choose a room that will accommodate the expected attendance. Most likely a small room that accommodates an average turnout of 10-15 people will be sufficient.
- Make sure the room is equipped for broadcast media (two- and three-pronged electric outlets, etc.).
- Provide a podium that can hold several microphones.
- Display your logo or organizational name on a podium board made of non-glare material.
- Provide chairs for reporters, leaving enough room in the back or in the middle for cameras and tripods.
- If several speakers will be offering remarks, provide a head table with chairs and name cards to identify each.
- Set up easels for any visual materials and make sure to bring double-sided tape to keep the visuals, podium logo, etc. in place.
- Provide a reception table at the room entrance for media to sign in and pick up media information kits. Ask them to provide their name, news organization, and phone number.
- Keep the media sign-in sheet. It is a crucial element for follow-up and future contact. Share the media sign-in sheet with the lead spokespeople before the news conference to alert them to the types of media present.
- Provide a holding room for spokespeople so incoming media will not try to question them before the news conference begins. Talking to media beforehand can sometimes detract from the overall orchestration of the event and the delivery of an effective message.
- Provide modest refreshments only if possible and affordable.

The Event – After all the initial preparations:

- Arrive a half- to one-hour early to make sure your room arrangements are in order.
- Bring along a tape recorder to set on the podium to record the news conference.
- Start the news conference on time and limit the event to 45 minutes or an hour. Allow ample time for questions and answers.
- Depending on the formality of the news conference, have a moderator make introductions and direct questions from the media to the appropriate person.
- If the setting is more informal, begin the news conference by greeting the reporters and briefly stating the purpose for bringing them to the event.
- After the question-and-answer period, leave the room as soon as possible – unless you have prearranged one-on-one interviews with select media.

Follow-up – Sometimes, even the best planned, most publicized news conferences can fail to attract media or be “upstaged” by unanticipated breaking news. Don’t give up or become discouraged. Now is the time to follow-up with those unable to attend in order to secure their interest and coverage.

- Call to inform reporters of what was said at the news conference. Offer to provide them with an interview so that they can cover the story.
- Make sure all the media outlets receive a news release or media kit along with the speakers’ statements and any other pertinent information. (Distribute by fax or hand deliver if there is a chance that a news organization will cover the story that day.)

OPINION EDITORIALS

Purpose – Opinion editorials or “op-eds” are submitted to daily and weekly newspapers to express the author’s position on a particular topic.

When to Use – Op-eds are good vehicles for explaining the issues behind your Fire Prevention Week campaign. You can emphasize what “When Fire Strikes: Get Out! Stay Out!” means to the people in your community and prevention and safety steps people can take.

How to Use – It is a good idea to call the op-ed editor to see if they are interested in the topic and your perspective before investing the time in preparing the piece.

During the conversation, explain why your views are important to their readers. Most daily papers have an op-ed review process that can take anywhere from one to ten days. Many of the larger dailies will require “exclusivity,” meaning they will consider your piece only when they are the sole paper receiving it. Be aware of any exclusivity clauses before contacting other newspapers.

When there are no exclusivity issues involved, do a mass mailing to papers and include a one-page “pitch” letter explaining why your opinion should be published, why it is current and relevant, and how your information will be of interest to the paper’s readership.

Keep in mind that the “author” of an op-ed is considered at least as important, if not more important, than the message. Make sure that the author you select is the most influential on the topic.

Format – A good opinion editorial should:

- Have a title and indicate authorship.
- Be approximately 400-800 words in length. Check with the papers in advance to determine their word count requirements.
- Be creative, but to the point. Editors like the use of vignettes and analogies, but want to first know what is new and important.
- While you may draw upon the Fire Prevention Week theme, focus on the local angles.
- Stay focused – many op-eds are rejected because the author never delivers a clear message with facts to back it up.
- Include in parentheses at the end the name of the author(s), title, organization, and a one-line description of your mission and membership base.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Purpose – Letters to the editor communicate your opinion without going through the editorial approval process required for publishing op-eds.

When to Use – Write letters to respond to editorials or to news coverage that is centrally linked to questions about the Fire Prevention Week program. Don't expect your letters to be printed every time. Most papers have policies on how frequently they will publish the same writer's views.

Following up one of your initial Fire Prevention Week efforts with a letter that thanks the community for its participation can be an effective way of encouraging participation at the subsequent public events. Be sure to include any upcoming dates and location details in your letter.

Format – A letter to the editor should convey the most important message in the first paragraph. The letter should be between 100 and 400 words. Pieces that are short and sweet are more apt to be printed. Remember to include your name, address, and daytime and evening telephone numbers so the paper can verify who wrote the letter.

Timing – Many newspapers will print several responses to one article on the same day. It is not unusual to see letters to the editor regarding material printed two months ago. This does not mean that you should wait to respond. Submit a letter as soon as possible – usually within a few days to a week of a story's appearance.

Check several of the responses in the "Letters to the Editor" section in your local papers to get an idea of the newspaper's time-frame for printing letters.



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