

Working with the Media

Your local media are great vehicles for reaching a larger audience and relaying fire safety messages for people ages 50 and older. The following tips will help you get results from the media. The Campaign Guide also includes sample media materials that you can adapt for your community and put on your fire department's letterhead.

Get Media Results from Materials and Spokesperson Interviews

- Send the news release announcing your department's new *Fire Safety Campaign for People 50-Plus* (see sample in the following pages) to all newspapers, radio and television stations in your area.
- Call local TV and radio stations and speak with the assignment editor (TV) or news director (radio). Alert them to the campaign. Offer to fax or e-mail them the campaign fact sheet – and send the news release again if necessary.
- Make similar calls to the newspaper editors and reporters who cover “fire,” “personal health and safety” and “seniors” beats and offer to fax or deliver materials in person.
- Designate a campaign spokesperson and offer the media interviews with him or her.
- Facts are what make a news story. Review the campaign's messages (see “Campaign Overview”) and use the statistics about people 50-plus and fire risk. You can also get statistics specific to your state from the “data report” on the computer CD or www.usfa.fema.gov/50Plus.
- Talk about a recent local fire in the interview. An anecdote that people can relate to makes the story more powerful, and relays the importance of fire safety.
- Have your spokesperson practice the messages before conducting the interview.

Ask Radio Stations to Air the Campaign Public Service Announcement (PSA)

- Adapt the sample radio script in the *Campaign Guide* to your department.
- Send the script to public service directors at your local radio stations along with a cover letter (sample included in *Campaign Guide*) on your department's letterhead. The letter describes the campaign and asks for the radio station's support.
- Call the public service directors to confirm that they received the PSA script and tell them briefly why this campaign is so important. Follow-up can make all the difference!
- Offer to provide a fire department spokesperson to record the radio PSA. The station may prefer for an announcer to use it as a “live-read” script.

Ask Local Newspapers and Magazines to Run the Print Public Service Ad (PSA)

- Call the newspapers and magazines and ask for a contact person for public service ads.
- Send a cover letter and a copy of the print ad (from the *Campaign Guide*) to the contact.
- Call the contact, urge the publication to run the ad, and offer to provide a camera-ready electronic version of the ad from the campaign CD. Either e-mail the print ad to the contact, direct them to the ad on www.usfa.fema.gov/50Plus, or lend them your CD.