



Working with the Media

Working with the media can increase awareness and help create positive impressions about your community's recycling and waste reduction programs, which in turn will help you reach the ultimate goal of increased recycling participation.

Press Releases

A press release (or "news release") is a statement prepared for distribution to the media. Press releases can feature announcements, specific topic information, or a general idea. A press release can also be used to announce the results of an event or activity that has recently occurred.

The typical format includes:

- The 5 W's – Who, What, Where, When and Why
- Your name and contact information
- 3-4 paragraphs of detailed information (such as price, location, hours, etc.)
- Boilerplate language explaining who you are (your organization, programs, etc)

Other things to keep in mind:

- Send your press release via email whenever possible. Copy and paste the press release into the body of the email; don't send it as an attachment. If you can't email it, send it by fax.
- If your press release topic is time sensitive (i.e. you're announcing an HHW collection day or a change in recycling service), send the press release 2-3 weeks in advance.
- If the topic is NOT time sensitive, put "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" on the top and send it any time. If you are inviting the media to an event, see "Media Advisory" on the next page.
- Put the press release on town/city letterhead, using 1.5 double spacing
- A catchy title on the press release will spark a reporter's interest.
- Include a quote from an elected official about the event or activity, if possible.
- Follow-up with the newspaper a few days after submitting the release. Don't ask, "Did you receive the press release?" Instead, tell them what event or press release you're calling about, and offer to answer questions they might have.

How to use press releases:

In addition to the samples in the outreach calendar section, here are some other ways to use press releases:

- Publicize the results of an event (e.g. HHW day, Zero Waste Day).
- Announce a recycling award (either one received by the municipality, or one given to a local organization or individual).
- Report the results of a local campaign or initiative (e.g. recycling increased by xx % after a pilot program was introduced).
- Announce changes or to your municipal recycling program.
- Solicit volunteers for a recycling committee or project.

Media Alerts or Advisories

A media alert or advisory is a prepared statement to the media inviting them to a particular event or news conference. It has the same elements of a press release (who, what, when, where, why), but abbreviated content and details. Send a media advisory out 3 weeks in advance of an event if possible, and always follow up with a phone call the day before to remind reporters of the event.

Guest Columns and Articles

Many community newspapers will set aside space on a regular basis for recycling information (e.g. the “recycling column” or “recycling corner”). With permission from your municipal officials, send a request on letterhead to the editor of your local paper. Provide a list of the proposed topics for the “recycling corner” and let them know you can provide articles on a regular basis. Newspapers are often happy to have well written “filler” material that can be used as needed.

Recycling Recognition

Is there an individual(s) in your community who is particularly dedicated to recycling, composting or other waste reduction activities? If so, consider a recycling recognition program. Use the “**Recycler of the Month**” template (provided), to spotlight a resident in your community for their recycling efforts with a photo in the local newspaper. Include a caption for the photo, and if possible, a quote from the resident about why they think recycling is important. Or, for a group of residents, even a school, or business, use the “**Any Town (Residents) Recycle!**” template. You can customize these templates to your liking.

Using photos in the Recycling Recognition PSAs

A digital photo (preferably a “head shot” or a clear “action shot”) is recommended because you can email it to the newspaper along with the Recycling Recognition file (above). A printed photograph can be provided, but most newspapers do not return photos. You will need to obtain the individual’s permission to send the photo to the newspaper. A “photo release form” is provided in this Toolkit, and should be signed by anyone who appears in the photo. This authorizes your municipality to use the photo for this purpose. It can be also be used when residents are quoted. If the photographed person is a minor, their legal guardian must sign this form.

Public Service Announcements

A Public Service Announcement (PSA) is essentially an advertisement with a “public benefit” message. PSAs can be used in print media (newspapers) and electronic media (television and radio) and are printed or broadcast at no cost. While getting a network television or major radio station to air a PSA can be difficult, cable television, public radio and local commercial radio stations are viable alternatives to getting the word out.

Radio and Television PSAs

Radio and Television stations receive Public Service Announcements every day and they are only able to air a small number.

About two thirds of communities with cable TV have at least one “public access” channel (dedicated to non-commercial use by the public), and some larger cities also have “local

origination” channels (similar to local commercial stations with paid advertisements) which are sometimes available for local programming.

To find a list of radio and television stations in your area, go to <http://www.shgresources.com> and select the “media” tab on the top right of the page

Tips for Using PSAs

Contact the stations on your list before you send out the PSAs.

- You can find the contact information for any station by looking in the phone book or going to their Web site. Contacting the stations directly serves several purposes: You are able to introduce yourself and let them know that you will be sending them materials, and you are able to find out what specific requirements they have.
- If you do not have a contact or name at the station, ask for the community affairs director or the person that handles public service announcements. Most of the time they are willing to help and answer any questions you have.

To increase the likelihood of your PSAs being used by the media:

- Try to deliver the PSA to your cable or radio station in person.
- Ask the station to create a customized “lead-in” to the material that includes local recycling information and a phone number. If you provide them with the written information, many cable stations are happy to do this, given adequate lead-time. .
- Include a cover letter (we have enclosed a sample) with any material you submit with your contact information, affiliation, the contents of the tape or CD, and your reason for sending it. Be sure to mention that it deals with local information.
- Follow up with the station to see if they’ve viewed the material (whether you mailed or delivered in person) and ask if they plan to run it.

Getting More PSAs:

There are a number of professionally produced radio and television PSAs on recycling that are available at little or no cost.

Earth 911: <http://www.earth911.org/usa/master.asp?s=psa&a=psa/psa.asp>

Curbside Value Partnership: <http://www.recyclecurbside.org/>

American Forest and Paper: http://www.afandpa.org/Template.cfm?section=News_Room