



Guide to Working with the Media

The 100 Years of Safety campaign provides a great opportunity to showcase your organization's long-standing commitment to safety, safety initiatives, and supporting the National Safety Council mission. Working with the media is a way to help bring your company's safety story to large audiences on a local, regional and national scale.

This document is a guide to best practices when working with members of the media – whether they be online, print or broadcast. When working with the media, it is important to collaborate with your organization's communications team and ensure that your efforts are in line with your organization's existing policies on media engagement.

Materials and platforms

Media advisory

A media advisory, sometimes called a media alert, provides important and basic facts about an event to members of the media so that editors can determine whether they want to cover the event. Typically one page in length, media advisories convey the “who, what, where, when and why” details that reporters need to know about an event. A media advisory should be sent 5-7 days before an event or announcement. Use and adapt the template found in the appendix of this document.

Press release

The most common method for providing information to the media is by press release, otherwise known as a news release. These contain the five W's and the one H (who, what, when, where and how), plus a quote and relevant background information. The headline of the press release should have impact and convey the main point of the release. The first/introductory paragraph is often all an editor or reporter will have time to read. This paragraph needs to read well, and stand on its own, as though each sentence could be pulled from the release and used as a quotation.

Your release should also contain a quote from an executive at your organization, typically a program director, president, or CEO. You may also want to include a quote from a relevant partner organization, such as the National Safety Council, or even a local government representative, if appropriate.

This toolkit includes a template press release for use during the 100 Years of Safety campaign. This template press release should be customized with your organization's background, information and announcement, and used in outreach to local and regional press.

Opinion piece/Op-ed

An opinion piece, authored by an executive from your organization, may be the best way to share your organization's safety stories. These should be to-the-point and clearly state an opinion or angle on the need for and success of your organization's safety commitment. Opinion pieces should also include key Celebration of the Century messages included in this toolkit.

Media spokesperson

Identify a member your communications or program team to serve as a media spokesperson. This could be a communications staffer or a project manager with media experience. Make sure this person is comfortable speaking into a microphone and appearing on camera.



Two weeks before an event or announcement, prepare the spokesperson for potential interviews by role-playing a mock interview. The spokesperson should also review and practice saying their key messages out loud. The 100 Years of Safety key messages, found in this toolkit, are a good place to start when preparing your key messages. Be sure to add information on your specific programs (e.g., background on your safety programs, success stories, and local impact) to these talking points.

If you find yourself surprised by an interview opportunity, still take time to prepare. Ask the reporters to give you five minutes before you start, then step aside with your spokesperson to review the key messages and any other pertinent information related to your event or announcement.

Social media

Social media tools like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube can help you reach a lot of people to let them know about the great work that your organization, and the National Safety Council, is doing. If your organization has an existing Facebook or Twitter page, work with your communications team to post regular updates throughout the Celebration of the Century campaign. This toolkit includes sample Facebook posts and tweets that can be used throughout the campaign.

Conducting outreach to local bloggers is another way to increase attention for your meaningful work. Ask your communications or public relations team to help identify bloggers who might be interested in writing about your story.

Tracking results

If you are successful in getting media to cover your story, whether it's an article, blog post or radio interview – congratulations! That is a meaningful achievement. Be sure to secure a digital copy of the coverage so you can share it with your organization and the National Safety Council. Also try to secure hard copies (particularly for newspaper articles) for your records.

Tips for pitching a story to the media

Often, press releases and media advisories are followed up with direct outreach to reporters by email or phone. Your organization can reach out to or “pitch” local and regional reporters in advance of an event or announcement. You may want to give one reporter or publication early access to information (an exclusive) to allow them to write a more extensive piece on your story.

When reaching out to media directly, it's important to remember several things:

- Keep it simple. Editors and reporters are often in a hurry. Assume that they will only read the first three sentences in your pitch, so make sure you get your main point across right away.
- Use email first. Email is usually the most effective way to reach reporters and editors. Follow up by phone, when needed.
- Be prepared to provide reporters with the information they'll need to write a story. This may include access to spokespersons from your organization, multimedia and additional statistics about your safety programs and the National Safety Council.
- Build relationships with reporters. Reporters are much more likely to write about your story when they are familiar with you, your organization and your background. Take your story to reporters you know well first, and use outreach as an opportunity to build new relationships with other reporters.



- Know what your reporters are interested in. It is very important to get the right information to the right person. For example, don't pitch a story on your safety programs to a reporter who writes about local schools.
- Include your press release, but not as an attachment. Include it in the body of the email to ensure it gets read and avoids email spam filters.

Tips for interviewing with media

- Nothing is off the record. Remember that anything you say can be quoted in a news story.
- Answer sentences with complete sentences, and bring focus to your organization's key messages.
- Provide anecdotes or colorful stories to illustrate your point.
- Be confident – you are the expert in the interview!
- Avoid speculation that can lead to misquotes.
- Avoid technical terms, jargon and acronyms.
- Do not say “no comment.” If you cannot answer, explain why and/or offer to refer the reporter to speak to another representative.
- Do not discuss sensitive information such as company performance.
- Always have a communications staffer present at interviews.
- Whenever possible, do your homework. Research the reporter's interests and reputation by reading previous articles.
- Do not be afraid to say, “I don't know, but I will find out for you.”
- For TV interviews, keep your answers to 20 seconds or less.
- Remember to smile – be friendly.
- Keep your eyes on the interviewer.
- Be honest.

Engaging employees in media relations

Employees are an organization's most valuable asset, and this is true in media relations as well. Additionally, media will often want to hear the real story of the impact of your safety program. This means that your employees have the perfect voice to communicate this story. Consider gathering anecdotes from your employees – or other groups impacted by your safety program – to serve as collateral when working with the media to develop coverage. These stories can also be used on internal and external communications platforms (e.g., websites and blogs your organization runs) when recognizing 100 Years of Safety.



APPENDIX

Sample Media Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: (Insert name of your organization's media contact), (Insert title of contact), (Insert work and cell phone number)

*****MEDIA ADVISORY*****

TITLE

For example: (ORGANIZATION) CELEBRATES 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF SAFETY MOVEMENT WITH NEW EMPLOYEE SAFETY INITIATIVE

WHAT: Insert details on what is taking place

For example: (Organization) will be announcing the details of the organization's new safety initiative at a press conference. Already known as an industry leader in safety, this new initiative will decrease workplace injuries by 50 percent. The announcement comes as (Organization) joins the National Safety Council in celebrating 100 Years of Safety.

WHO: Insert details on who will be participating. If relevant, include details on participating partner organizations.

For example:

- *John Smith, CEO of (Organization)*
- *Jim Johnson, Group Vice President, Workplace Safety Initiatives, the National Safety Council*
- *Jane Doe, Safety Coordinator of (Organization)*

WHEN: Insert month, date, year and time of the event or announcement.

WHERE: Insert location of event or announcement.

CONTACT: Additional information about (Organization) can be found online at (Website), or by calling (Phone Number).