



Community Outreach Ideas

EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY about proper smoke alarm installation, testing and maintenance will ensure that more homes in your community are properly protected from fire, and meet updated requirements for smoke alarm placement. It will also educate residents about the different types of smoke alarms and their capabilities, as well as the multiple installation options available to them.

Attention Shoppers

Interactive demos, such as a smoke alarm display and testing demonstration, are a great way to get the public's attention. Think about partnering with big box stores (Home Depot, Lowe's, Wal-Mart) to arrange a public demonstration. Make sure to have materials, such as the smoke alarm checklist (included in this kit), to provide information about different types of smoke alarms on the market, installation options, and location requirements, along with general tips for proper maintenance and testing.

Stop the Presses

Local media can give you a lot of bang for no bucks. Use the sample press release, op-eds, and letters to the editor provided in this kit to better inform your community. You can also provide newspapers and circulars with the print PSAs included in the kit.

Cable Access

Contact your local cable station to present the smoke alarm video.

Plan an Open House!

Pick a Date and Location: Your event can be held during the day or evening, but it must be at a time when people in your community are available. Saturday and Sunday afternoons are often most convenient, and fewer events tend to take place on weekends. However, your fire department's public educator or coordinator should check the community calendar to make sure there are minimal conflicts. The event may be held at your firehouse, the public library, a community center, or the town hall.

Ensure Adequate Staffing and Equipment: Emergencies can happen at any time, including during an event. If yours is being held at a fire station, make sure enough firefighters are available so that even if a crew must leave, there is still staff available to meet with attendees.

Have Handouts Ready: Use the smoke alarm checklist, or other printed materials, to educate people about current smoke alarm installation requirements and recommendations, maintenance, and testing.

Keep it Brief: Generally, the public won't attend an event that requires hours of their time. Visitors should be able to learn at least one smoke alarm message in 30 minutes or less.

Feed Them: Nothing draws a crowd like good food. Arrange for a local restaurant or fast food outlet to sponsor and provide refreshments. Have firefighters cook up their favorite specialty or solicit donations of baked goods from local shops. Ask local distributors or bottling companies to donate cold drinks.

Make It Fun: Hold activities that allow visitors to meet firefighters and learn about smoke alarm safety in the process. Hand out stickers or other small treats for children. Have a fire truck available for visitors to check out.

Promote, Promote, Promote: No matter how great your plans are, it won't be a success if no one knows about it. Publicize your open house at each and every opportunity, and as far in advance as possible. Use the smoke alarm "fill-in-the-blank" news release in this kit to promote your event to local media outlets. Develop and pass out flyers to local businesses; send letters to civic and religious groups that can announce your event, etc. These are just a few suggestions — be creative, and use your resources to your full advantage.

— Keeping Your Community Safe and Sound —