



# Community Outreach Ideas



**EDUCATING THE PUBLIC** about the importance of carbon monoxide (CO) alarms, their placement, maintenance, and proper testing can increase residents' safety and help prevent tragedies. Educating the public about CO alarms can also keep residents up-to-date on CO alarm requirements and the types of alarms that are available to them.

**Calling All Shoppers!** Get the public's attention with exhibits, displays, and interactive demos. Consider a partnership with big box stores (e.g., Lowe's, Home Depot, Wal-Mart), or your community hardware store, to arrange a public demonstration and to encourage stores to display CO alarms near products that present a risk of CO poisoning such as portable generators. Make sure you have materials, such as "Fast Facts about CO Alarms" (included in this kit) to provide information on the symptoms of CO poisoning and the different types of CO alarms on the market.

**Stop the Presses!** Local media can give you a lot of bang for no bucks. Use the sample press releases, letters to the editor, and talking points provided in this kit to inform your community. In addition, you can provide consumers with newspapers and circulars with print PSAs included in the kit.

**Cable Access:** Contact your local cable station to do an interview about the importance of CO alarms. Include a CO alarm demo.

**Webinar:** Schedule a community webinar to inform people about the importance of CO alarms and to answer residents' questions about the alarms.



## Plan an Open House!

**Pick a Date and Location:** Your event can be held during the day or evening, but it should be at a time when people in your community are available. Saturday and Sunday afternoons are often the most convenient days, 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, even during an event. If your event is being held at a fire station, make sure enough firefighters are available so that even if a crew must leave, staff is still available to meet with attendees.

**Have Handouts Ready:** Use the CO safety handouts to educate people about current CO alarm installation requirements and recommendations, maintenance, and testing.

**Keep it Brief:** Generally, the public won't attend an event if it requires hours of their time. Visitors should be able to learn at least one CO 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:** Host activities that allow visitors to meet firefighters and learn about CO 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, your open house won't be a success if no one knows about it. Publicize the event at each and every opportunity, and as far in advance as possible. Use the CO 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. These are just a few suggestions—be creative, and use your resources to your full advantage.