



Hot Ideas: How to Get Heating Safety Messages Out to Your Community

Your neighbors are your best resource to help spread heating safety messages. Here are a few examples of ways to get the word out to your community about home heating safety.

- **Hold an Open House:** This gives residents a chance to see the firehouse up close while providing valuable public education. Focus on heating safety messages demonstrating the proper use of a portable space heater and provide information on annual inspection of heating equipment. Invite a local plumber, heating company or chimney sweep to participate in the presentation.
- **Involve Your Audience:** Interactive demos are a great way to get the public's attention. Think about partnering with heating/gas companies, chimney cleaners, big box stores (Home Depot, Lowe's, Wal-Mart), supermarkets or other high-traffic businesses.
- **Focus on At-risk Populations:** Older adults and families with low incomes are especially vulnerable to heating fires. Visit assisted living communities or community centers that offer childcare.
- **Reach Out to Specific Populations:** Does your community have a large immigrant population? Visit local churches or community centers where they socialize. It's a great opportunity to meet new residents and share heating safety tips.
- **Stop the Presses:** Local media can give you a lot of bang for no bucks. Use the sample press release and op/eds provided in this kit to give them the facts. You can also provide them with tips and the ready-to-print heating safety spots.
- **Run a Community Listing:** Submit events to community bulletins and church newsletters.
- **Bill It:** Work with local heating companies to distribute heating safety inserts with customer's bills using the heating safety spots.
- **Cable Access:** Contact your local cable station to present a segment on heating safety.
- **Door to Door:** Conduct a carbon monoxide alarm installation campaign in your community. Work with local business for funding or alarm donations. Visit high-risk neighborhoods and install carbon monoxide alarms.

Event Planning Tips

Decide what you want to achieve at your event and who your audience is. You'll want to make sure your activities reinforce heating safety messages and provide useful information on how to prevent a fire.

Pick a Date and Location

Your event can be held during the day or evening, but it must be a time that 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. Of course the firehouse is always fun for the public. Other places that draw crowds include the public library, community centers and the grocery store.

Ensure Adequate Staffing and Equipment

Emergencies can happen at any time, including during an open house. If your event 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 visitors.

Have Handouts Ready

Have handouts available for all age groups. Distribute printed materials that reinforce heating safety.

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 positive fire safety action that will help them learn safety messages 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 chefs. Ask local distributors or bottling companies to donate cold soda.

Make It Fun

Hold activities that allow visitors to meet firefighters and learn about fire safety in the process. Human interaction creates a personal experience for people, and is key to an open house's success. Create hands-on learning opportunities to build participants' safety skills.

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 heating safety "fill-in-the-blank" news release 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!