

# PSA How-to Guide

## Is a PSA the right tool to use to get your message into the public's hands?

When deciding whether to distribute a PSA to the public, take into consideration:

- Who you are addressing with this PSA. Some audiences (limited-English, illiteracy, etc.) may need to be communicated to by using other methods.
- How quickly the message needs to get out to the public. Using a radio station allows you to reach a large segment of the population at once and quickly.
- How much information you need to get out to the public. A PSA is shorter. You have to be concise and clear. Most PSAs are 30 seconds or less when recorded, unless this is an unusual situation and the radio station manager allows you to record longer.

## What should the PSA include?

When drafting a PSA:

- **Know who the target audience is.** This will help you draft a PSA that addresses this population's concerns.
- **Know what the public's perception of the event is.** This will allow you to address fears and rumors.
- **Be sympathetic to the victims.** People want to know you care. Often, this is best achieved by using someone in your health department who is an expert in the situation at hand or whom the public is familiar with and trusts to record the PSA. Make sure the individual speaks clearly and slowly, so the public understands the message.
- **Stay "on the message."** If your message is prevention, make that clear in the PSA. One, you are educating them on prevention. Two, you are providing them with a responsibility. When people feel there is something they can do, it helps eliminate, or at least lessen, their fear and anxiety.
- **Keep the message simple.** Don't use jargon or technical terms the public will not understand.
- **Never feel pressed to give "new" information that cannot be confirmed.** This goes back to staying "on the message."

## How should I distribute the PSA?

There are several ways:

- By email. However, most publications, especially newspapers, use Mac computers. So, when emailing the PSA to them copy it and paste it directly into the body of the email. This will ensure they get it and can use it.
- Fax it.
- Hand-deliver it.
- Record it. If you have the technology to record it, this will allow you to have an audio file ready ahead of time for the radio station. This also allows you to use someone who may otherwise not be available when the event is happening. However, some radio stations will also allow you to record the PSA over the phone. This saves time and is most efficient.