

Press Release *How-to Guide*

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

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

- Who you are addressing with this press release. 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. If your community newspaper is published weekly or bi-weekly, you may want to consider another method of communication. If the newspaper or other publication in your community is daily, you would want to send your press release to that publication.
- The number of people who read the newspaper or other publication to which your press release will be sent. If the publication reaches a small number of households, you may want to consider another method of communication along with the press release.
- How much information you need to get out to the public. A press release allows you to include more information than other methods like a Public Service Announcement (PSA), which is shorter.

What should the press release include?

When drafting a press release:

- **Know who the target audience is.** This will help you draft a press release 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 inserting a quote into the press release from someone in your health department who is an expert in the situation at hand or whom the public is familiar with and trusts.
- **Stay "on the message."** If your message is prevention, remind the public of this often in the press release. 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 press release?

There are several ways:

- By email. However, most publications, especially newspapers, use Mac computers. So, when emailing the press release 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.