



GETTING PUBLICITY

Four ways you can help reporters prepare stories about your event are listed below. There are many resources in this starter kit and on our website to help you prepare publicity. Also, news reporters in your area who contact the National Walk to School website may be referred to you (if your events are registered).



1) Release a **press advisory** two or three days ahead of event.

Keep your press advisory simple and specific, giving the “who, what, when, where and why” of the event. If you don’t have prior contact with a reporter, we suggest you address your press advisory to city reporters, rather than transportation or environmental reporters. Caution: press advisories sent on Friday can get lost by Monday.

2) Fax a **press release** to reporters the evening before or very early on the morning of the event. A press release reminds reporters to attend the event, or to run the story anyway.

3) Prepare **press packets** for reporters who come to the event. A press packet can include:

- a) Press release
- b) No more than 2 pages of background information, with quotes to use in stories. Include how event ties to local agenda and perhaps also state policy agenda, e.g. Gov. Schwarzenegger’s interest in physical activity.
- c) Recent policy report or pedestrian safety study, e.g., from the Surface Transportation Policy Project: www.transact.org/ca

4) To get **advance publicity**, submit a story to your local media: newspapers, radio and television stations. Feel free to get ideas from the story ideas provided below. Some papers will use your information to assign a reporter to write a story and/or attend your event. Other papers, radio and television stations will use what you give them.

Advance publicity can help financial sponsors and volunteers find you. It can also make local residents and government staff more sympathetic to your cause. Be persuasive, using data, drama or stories from last year’s event to describe the importance of this year’s Walk to School activities. Use as much local information and quotes as possible. A sample story is on the website listed below for you to download and adapt. Here are a few ways to start a story:

Story idea #1: Where is the scariest place during the morning rush hour? It just may be right in front of the elementary school near you. In the 15 minutes before the morning school bell, cars converge upon the street nearest the school entrance. It’s no understatement to call this mix of children, buses and cars a crime.

Story idea #2: Emma usually gets to school 45 minutes early. Is she doing extra work for early college credits? Participating in an early morning club to enhance her extracurricular activities? No, she is only in the 3rd grade and her mother has to drop her off early so that she can get to her job downtown by 9:00am. Last year Emma and her mother changed their routine to participate in Walk to School Month. They joined other parents and students who walked to school that day. “It was neat to walk to school with my friends, it felt like we were part of a parade” said Emma. Her mother, Alice Norton, agreed and said “I like waving at the neighbors a lot more than gritting my teeth at other drivers.”

