

Localize sample press materials; copy onto your letterhead

Choose a story idea from the list and use your letterhead to draft a press release

Use story idea to write a cover letter

Send to appropriate media contacts

Follow up with a phone call

Working with the Media

By working with local media, you can reach significantly more residents and deliver the simple life-saving *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*[®] message with credibility and urgency. Following are some tips to help distribute news releases, get public service announcements aired, secure a media sponsor and conduct media interviews.

Placing Your *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*[®] Stories in the News

- Tailor the appropriate sample news release. Print it onto your fire department letterhead and send it with a copy of the “fire statistics” and a cover letter explaining the *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*[®] program. Send it to your local media contacts including:
 - **Daily newspapers:** city/metro desk editor, feature editor, family/parenting editors, kids reporter/kids page editor, education reporter, calendar editor
 - **Radio stations with news programs:** news director
 - **TV stations:** weekday and weekend producers and assignment editors; meteorologists (to mention during weathercast)
 - **Weekly newspapers:** editor
- Use the provided “Sample Letter to the Editor” to voice your support of the life-saving *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*[®] message in a newspaper editorial or opinion column.
- Use the following story ideas to illustrate issues relevant to your community. Send with your news release and cover letter. Include local area statistics and examples of recent home fires.
 - **Teaching Kids About Home Fires and Home Safety:** Alert media to the vulnerabilities of children in a home fire and provide tips for teaching kids about fire and home safety.
 - **Home Fire Safety Education:** Invite reporters, photographers and camera crews to accompany your education officer to a local elementary school to cover your department’s home fire safety education program and the *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*[®] message.
 - **Home Safety Audit:** Ask a reporter to accompany you on a home safety audit. Check smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors and install *Energizer*[®] MAX[®] brand batteries.
 - **Neighborhood Home Safety Inspections:** Invite a reporter to observe a larger-scale neighborhood canvass to check smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors and install fresh *Energizer*[®] MAX[®] brand batteries.
 - **Simulated Fire Escape:** Have a TV crew observe a simulated fire escape by a local family. Emphasize the role of a working smoke alarm’s early warning.
 - **Interview a Survivor:** Identify someone “saved” by a working smoke alarm and encourage the media to interview him or her for a story.
 - **How to Conduct a Home Safety Drill:** Offer tips for this life-saving plan.
 - **Local Fire Safety Awareness Contest:** Work with media to structure a local contest where participants are asked to guess the number of smoke alarms in the fire chief’s, mayor’s or governor’s home. Prizes could include an honorary fire chief hat and a plaque in the fire station.

Working with the Media *continued*

- Follow up by phone to encourage media to cover your story. If necessary, identify department spokespersons or people who have been “saved” by smoke alarms to conduct interviews.
- Send a special letter to the metro or city editor at your local daily and weekly newspapers. Ask them to run the *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*® logo (if possible, on the front page) during the time change weekend. Include art from the provided camera-ready slicks.
- Send a special letter to area television and radio meteorologists. Ask them to remind viewers/listeners about the *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*® program when they cover the local weather. Send a smoke alarm and Energizer® battery as a prop.

Getting Public Service Announcements (PSAs) Aired

- Customize the PSA scripts provided in the media materials section to include your department’s name and other local information, such as your department’s help line.
- Identify public service directors at local radio, TV and cable stations and send them the PSA scripts along with a letter asking for their support.
- Follow up by phone and ask for an informational meeting. Ask the public service director to air the PSAs during the last two weeks of October and the first week of November.

- Encourage the station to identify itself as a sponsor at the end of the PSA. Called a “station ID,” the spot would end with a tagline such as, “This message brought to you by Energizer, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, WKRP and the Cincinnati Fire Department.”

Securing a Media Sponsor

- Establish contact as early as possible.
- Write or call the public service/promotion directors of major media organizations (TV and radio stations, daily newspapers, cable stations) in your community and explain your department would like to partner with a media organization for the *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*® public education campaign. A local media sponsor can be great help in getting the word out on the importance of proactive fire safety plans.
- Remember competing media organizations (e.g., local network TV affiliates) will likely demand exclusive sponsorships. Non-competing media organizations, such as a local network TV affiliate and a local radio station, generally will not demand exclusive arrangements.
- Keep in mind by partnering with one media organization (or two or more non-competing organizations), your department is likely to receive more coverage — and better quality coverage. However, other competing media organizations may only devote limited coverage to the program.
- Determine which media organizations are interested in discussing a potential sponsorship. If possible, arrange a one-on-one meeting to discuss the *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*® program and its importance to your community.
- Ask media organizations to help spread the word through PSAs, news coverage, editorials and the involvement of news personalities as spokespeople. Be prepared to offer them something in return, including exclusive stories, department spokespersons and involvement of department personnel.
- Finalize media sponsorship arrangements. Confirm them in writing.



Working with the Media *continued*

- Keep media partners up-to-date throughout the campaign. Remember to thank them afterward.

Giving a Media Interview

Before the interview, familiarize yourself with the *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*® program and the following speaking points:

- The *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*® program is a national home fire safety campaign sponsored by *Energizer*, the International Association of Fire Chiefs and your local fire department.

- Twenty-four years ago, *Energizer* and the International Association of Fire Chiefs recognized a disturbing trend that many home fire fatalities were taking place in homes without working smoke alarms.

Energizer and the International Association of Fire Chiefs have worked together along with thousands of fire departments nationwide to help reduce the number of home fire fatalities by reminding communities to check and change their smoke alarm batteries and to make sure their smoke alarms are working.

The *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*® program urges Americans to adopt a simple life-saving habit: changing smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector batteries when they change their clocks back to standard time each fall — this year on **November 6**.

- This fall, the *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*® program sponsors are working with kids to help teach their parents about the importance of smoke alarm maintenance. Eighty percent of fire deaths involving children occur in homes without working smoke alarms. Sponsors are also encouraging kids to remind their parents to change and test the batteries in their smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.

- Working smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in reported home fire structures in half. They provide an early warning and critical extra seconds to escape.

- When you change your clock back, use the “extra” hour to change the batteries in your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors and also remind your friends, family and neighbors to do the same. Also take a few other safety prevention measures such as:

- Making sure the alarms work by pushing the test button.
- Cleaning the smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors by vacuuming them. Repeat the cleaning monthly.
- Counting all smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors to make sure there are at least one on every floor, one in every bedroom and one outside each sleeping area so that it can be heard through a closed door.
- Checking flashlight batteries and placing working flashlights near all beds to help family members signal for help in a fire.
- Planning and rehearsing two escape routes during a fire and selecting a meeting place for family members outside the home.
- Replacing smoke alarms every 10 years and have both ionization and photo electric smoke alarms.

- Residents are encouraged to use their extra hour to help out at a local fire department. Eighty percent of fire departments are volunteer fire departments and they can often use extra hands to help with non-fire fighting related tasks. Reach out to your local fire department and see how you can help.

- During the interview, mention local home fire statistics and stories. Media rely on facts as well as stories. For TV, think visually and have plenty of props (*Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*® banner, smoke alarm, *Energizer*® batteries) on hand.

*Claims substantiated by the National Fire Protection Association