



**Chapter 10:  
Public Relations and Working  
with Media  
Pages 198-215**



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**Objectives (1 of 3)**

- Explain why safety educators inherit the role of public relations as part of their responsibilities. (p. 198)
- Distinguish the differences among public relations, publicity, and marketing. (pp. 198–199)
- Demonstrate an understanding of internal and external publics for fire departments. (pp. 200–201)

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**Objectives (2 of 3)**

- Discuss basic principles of public relations. (p. 199)
- Identify various marketing tools available to safety educators to promote safety messages. (pp. 211–213)
- Identify ways people are persuaded and provide examples of each. (pp. 202–203)
- List types of publicity available to safety educators for advancing safety messages. (pp. 206–209)

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## Objectives (3 of 3)

- Notify the public and convey the details about a scheduled event (NFPA 4.4.5). (pp. 207–209)
- Distribute educational information to a target audience within a specified timeframe (NFPA 4.4.6). (pp. 207–211)
- Using the appropriate electronic forms of communication for the topic, convey accurate and timely information about an event, incident, or policy (NFPA 4.4.7). (pp. 207–209)

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## Introduction

- Many larger departments have personnel trained and designated specifically as **public information officers (PIOs)**.
- Safety educators are often approached by both media and community members with questions and comments.
- It is important for safety educators at all levels to understand some basic principles of public relations.

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## Principles of Public Relations

- Good public relations works to provide services, promote ideas, and persuade the public about information to improve their lives.
- People working in public relations must:
  - Be effective communicators
  - Be aware of the political climate and sensitive issues
  - Follow economic and social trends
  - Use psychology, sociology, and other social science skills
  - Gather information and share it ethical in their words and actions

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## What is Public Relations?

- More than building a good reputation
  - Public and target audience: Research these
    - What information to tell
    - Who to tell it to and how it should be told
    - Media to communicate through
  - Requires several skills
    - Written and verbal communication
    - Technology, diversity sensitivity, and problem solving
    - Research, proofreading, and retracing steps

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## What is Public Relations?

- Principles of public relations
  - Place public's interest in forefront
  - Never lie to the media – learn how to tactfully withhold sensitive information
- Monitoring issues
  - Monitor issues and *anticipate problems!*
  - ***Stay current and ask questions!***
- Addressing issues
  - Thoroughly evaluate and manage
  - ***Discuss with the fire chief and standardize***

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## Monitoring the Issues

- Educators need to monitor issues and anticipate how to deal with potential problems.
- The strategy developed should reflect the opinion of the entire organization, accommodating all demographics.
- Internal communication is important because the administration needs to be informed of all concerns and plans for new initiatives.

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## Addressing the Issues

- Conflicting issues once identified have to be thoroughly evaluated and managed in a timely fashion.
- The first step would be an attempt to “contain and maintain.”
- The choice made must be tempered by the organization, the people, the community, and other external factors.
  - The educator has the added responsibility of being the one to raise touchy questions with the management as well as to present unpleasant and unpopular outcomes to proposed ideas.

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## Planning and Researching

Important decisions and plans for the future are all based on research. After the educator has identified the problems and goals for resolution, program development and implementation can begin.

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## Planning and Researching

- Informal research
  - Examples: opinion polls, observations, etc.
- Formal research
  - **Qualitative:** describes conditions and events
    - Examples: case studies, histories, etc. – the human element
  - **Quantitative:** based on measurement
    - Provides high degree of predictability and reliability
    - Examples: data from hospitals, schools, etc.

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## Publics and Audiences (1 of 2)

- **Audience:** passive recipients
  - Messages, speeches, presentations, etc.
- **Public:** more active
  - Act together and share a common bond
- **Internal publics** are those that share an internal identity, such as other department divisions.
- **External publics** exists outside the organization but have some relationship with it.
- It is best when the external and internal publics' perception of the organization is the same.

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## Publics and Audiences (2 of 2)

- All media have an influence on **public opinion**.
- It is important to build positive relations with the media, local, state, and national, during nonemergency situations.
- Three categories of publics need special attention:
  - Frontline employees
  - Women
  - Minorities

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## Persuasion and Changing Behavior

- The purpose of fire and life safety education is to **change behavior**.
- Be careful with the use of **Patronage**
- Persuasion appeals (page 203)
  - Core beliefs, reciprocity, and scarcity
- The results of campaigns and other efforts to change behavior need to be monitored and assessed.

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## The Persuaders

- **Personal persuaders:** more influential
  - Respected authorities, family members, friends, and organizations people belong to
- **Impersonal persuaders:** can reach a greater number of people at one time
  - Celebrity spokespersons, mass media, and public officials
- **Safety educators can become personal persuaders for their communities.**

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## Persuasion Appeals

- One should avoid using some of the methods of persuasion employed to tempt and mislead people in advertising, politics, and other media campaigns.
- Adopt methods that cause people to accept new behavior changes, such as:
  - When the message is consistent with their core beliefs
  - When authority figures are familiar, trusted, and able to instill confidence.
  - When people are involved in the decision-making process

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## Messages

- Message delivery
  - Give good news first
  - **Tell both sides of the story**
  - Use **repetition** and **consistency**, but not to the point of being ignored

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## Messages

- Be clear and tell exactly what to do *not* just what not to do
- Keep it Simple
- Offer information and contacts for people to make their own conclusions
- No two people will hear the same message
- Keep in mind the personal biases that may interfere with the way a message is received.

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## Message Purpose

- Message foundation
  - Derived from objectives and goals
  - Purpose: motivate and inspire people to take appropriate actions
- Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs
  - **Primary needs must be satisfied first**
    - Then higher levels may be achieved

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## Message Purpose

- People will not be motivated to achieve higher levels until their more primary needs are satisfied.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

<b>Self-Actualization</b> <small>Finding a calling, morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, acceptance of facts, realizing all inner potentials</small>
<b>Esteem</b> <small>Need to be a unique individual with feeling of value, self-respect, respect of others, sense of worth, confidence, achievement</small>
<b>Love/Belonging</b> <small>Need for belonging, giving and receiving love, appreciation, friendship and family</small>
<b>Safety</b> <small>Basic need for security in a family and society, protection and safety against hunger and violence, lack of resources</small>
<b>Physiological</b> <small>Need for food, water, oxygen, shelter and clothing</small>

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### Message Quality

- Make sure nonverbal symbols do not offend any publics.
- Pictures and graphics must match the message.
- Choose words, symbols, logos, and icons familiar to the public.
  - **Branding** helps to connect to the public on an emotional level, motivate people, and create loyalty.
- Put the most important information up front and make those first sentences clear and interesting.
- Print media is more effective for complex messages; video is more effective for simple messages.

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### Message Receivers

- Conversation with others is a powerful method of sending messages.
- A unique message is more easily remembered.
- Meaningful material is more easily retained.
- Help the public reach the goals you set for them.
- Provide a way for the public to follow up with questions and concerns.

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### Message Receivers

Audiences are more likely to accept information from respected individuals – that’s you!  
Face to face messaging is powerful.

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## Ethics and Legal Issues

- Supporting documents – page 206
  - Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
  - “Sunshine laws” (open meeting laws)
  - **Copyright laws** – get permission from the copyright holder. Use the © symbol
  - Patents
  - Trademarks
  - **Model releases** – Important for all FLSE (206)
  - Waivers

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## General Guidelines for Working with the Media

- Check all facts for accuracy.
- Make sure the content is appropriate to the medium.
- Allow enough lead time.
- Include *all* contact information on the first page
- Prepare a **backgrounder sheet**.
- Be prepared with **incident information worksheets**.

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## Publicity

- Supplying factual, interesting, and newsworthy information to a news medium
- Guidelines for working with the media
  - What’s newsworthy? (**soft and hard news**)
  - Press releases - News Advisories – **page 207**
  - Photography for publicity
  - **Brochures and pamphlets – show them first to someone from target community!**
  - Speeches, presentations, and campaigns

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## What’s Newsworthy?

- Some criteria to ensure newsworthiness:
  - Keep opinions out of the material.
  - Have a **peg**.
  - Make sure the news has the *who, what, when, where, why, and how*.
  - Ask yourself: Would you be interested in reading the piece?

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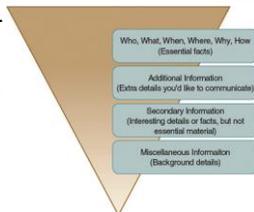
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## Press Releases

- **Press release:** a news release sent to the media.
- A standard inverted pyramid:
  - Preferred format for press releases
  - Ensures the most important information is placed up front and less likely to be cut as the article is edited for reasons of limited space



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Class Activity – Page 207

### CREATE A PRESS RELEASE

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### Media Advisories

- **Media advisory:** a one-page sheet that alerts the press to an upcoming news event.
- This is different from the press release, which announces breaking news and is written like a news story.

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### Public Service Announcements

- Messages delivered by the media without charge for the public interest.
- They are short, deliberate, and leave the receiver with an image that is catchy and easily remembered.

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## Social Media

- A collective term that refers to online communication platforms dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing, collaboration, and other formats such as photos and videos.
- Even here it is necessary to have a peg.
  - **Images capture attention better than text.**
- The choice of the platform to be used to deliver messages depends on the platform used by the target audience.

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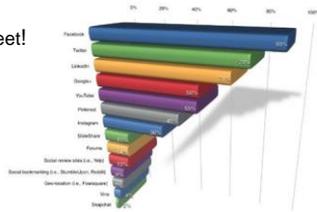
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## Social Media

- Facebook
- Twitter
  - Teachers Tweet!
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- Pinterest
- Instagram

Commonly used social media platforms



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## General Photography Guidelines for Publicity

- Find out exactly where to send the photos.
- Include basic information about the subject and event.
- Try to capture the *meaning* and *feeling* of an event.
- **Ask the person in charge of the facility for permission to take pictures during the event, especially if children are involved.**
- Carefully review all aspects of the photo.

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## Brochures and Pamphlets

- The content and photographs can be tailored to the local community.
- Photographs of **local** people, places, and settings help to develop stronger connections.
- Take care to ensure proper grammar, eye-pleasing layouts, appropriate and professional looking graphics, and consistency in style among several different pieces.
- Always make a **mock-up**. Have someone from the targeted community review it.

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## Speeches and Presentations as Publicity

- These should include:
  - Support materials about the schedule of events
  - Information about individuals and organizations that will be participating
  - A fact sheet promoting the purpose and mission of the event
- Find and make a connection between the mission of the event and the interests of the audience.

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## Campaigns

- **Campaign:** A coordinated and purposeful effort to address an issue, achieve a goal, improve a situation, or solve a problem within a predetermined time frame.
- For a campaign to be successful:
  - Identify the goal for the intended audience.
  - Develop a systematic plan.
  - Identify the media to be used.
  - Include a process of evaluation.



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## Marketing

- Another aspect of public relations
  - Shaping the department's image
  - Promoting
    - Safety practices, messages, and products
  - Many forms
    - Basic, inexpensive methods
    - Sophisticated, costly methods

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## Marketing

- Although it is not advisable to recommend specific brands, it is certainly important to market the technology and safety advantages behind the products and promote their use.
- As a marketing agent, educators must constantly update and improve existing messages and the quality of programs.
- The most effective marketing for message retention is face-to-face contact.

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## Marketing (cont'd.)

- Marketing methods
 

– Printed materials (consumables)	– Ethnic marketing
– Radio and television	– Community involvement
– Banners and signs	– Testimonials
– Direct mail	– Word of mouth
– Contests and drawings	– Social Media

***Educational Materials are only as good as their applicability to the audience***

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## Marketing (cont'd.)

**The message and materials must match the audience!**

***Educational Materials are only as good as their applicability to the audience***

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## Printed Materials

- Work with a graphic artist to assess the quality and visual interest of publications.
- Some common forms of printed material: brochures, inserts, monthly feature or column in the local paper

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## Radio and Television

- The messages are repeated and reach a large audience.
- Radio has the advantage of listeners tuning in and out when driving, at work, and at home.
- Messages should be matched to the station's demographics.
- A PSA for radio needs to catch the listener's attention within the first five seconds.
  - Within a 30-second PSA spot, a message or the department name should be repeated several times.

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## Banners and Signs

- Before putting up a banner, check the local zoning regulations regarding size, and then make it as big as possible.
- Make sure it is visible.
- Use lights on the sign if it is feasible.
- The message should be catchy, creative, and short -10 words or fewer.
- Proofread it several times.
- Use current fire service terms
- Consider where the banner will be posted.

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## Direct Mail

- **Direct mail** works best with a small, highly targeted population, more so if the mailings can be personalized.
- Design the piece to fit the message, the target audience, and the image of the department.
- Proofread and re-proofread it.
- If a response is requested, make the requested action simple and easy to understand and perform.
- Disadvantage: Direct mailings can be costly.

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## Contests and Drawings

- Obtain the necessary permissions before holding a contest.
- The contest should fulfill an educational objective and not be thrown out to the community simply for the fun of it.
- Add a skill component to promote the idea that it is not blind luck that wins.
- The prize need not be a tangible item; it can be an opportunity to do something, like ride the fire truck to school, or star in a safety video.

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## Ethnic Marketing

- Basis of ethnic groups is varied: religion, culture, profession, gender, etc.
- Mainstream marketing techniques may not be as effective with some of these groups because of predetermined attitudes, economic conditions, or biases.
- Work directly with their members to decide the best way of marketing.

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## Community Involvement

- Getting out into the community is one of the most effective forms of marketing.
- Plan activities to strengthen community support.
- Be sure to obtain permission from administration first.

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## Testimonials

- A letter or verbal testimonial speaks volumes for the success of a program.
- Do not hesitate to ask it of others, especially if it is a trusted source.
- Anonymous feedback from participants is also recommended.

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## Word of Mouth

- People talk about the message and methods and pass them on to others.
- Follow through on promises, research the audience, prepare, and deliver on even the smallest request.
- And, last—*overdeliver*: People might not know they have a need until you present the problem and provide solutions and assistance.

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## Public Information Officer

- For more information about the role of Public Information Officer and working with the media
  - Chapter 20 – Pages 333 - 347

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## What This Means for Fire and Life Safety Educators

- Considerations
  - Fire and life safety educators
    - Must develop basic public relations skills
  - Public relations
    - Learning about the public
    - Teaching the public
  - Internal fire department publics
    - Just as important as external publics
    - May be the most difficult

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### Summary (1 of 3)

- It is critical to develop the basic skills of public relations specialists because there will be occasions when you are representing the department as a spokesperson.
  - Your actions will help earn a positive reputation for the department.
- Public relations is as much about learning about the public as it is teaching the public about the department and its messages.
- The internal fire department publics are just as important as the external publics.
  - If educators fail to reach the internal publics, the department may not be able to present a united message.

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### Summary (2 of 3)

- The internal fire department publics may be the most difficult audience, culture, and population to influence, but these groups should not be avoided or neglected.
- Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory has withstood the test of time.
  - Consider the nature of the audience when delivering a presentation.
  - What state of the hierarchy are they connecting with at the time?
  - Educators can use this information as a way to persuade their constituents.

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### Summary (3 of 3)

- Become familiar with ethics and legal issues before launching programs and publishing works to avoid discrediting the department or yourself.
  - More serious ramifications, such as lawsuits, could result if these simple terms are not met.
- Be sure to have others look at computer-generated pamphlets and brochures before distributing it.
  - Consider consulting an individual trained in graphics or page layout work to ensure a more professional product.

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