



Actions That Make A Difference

Working With The Media

Publicity is vital to the success of “Put It Down” efforts. Neither community events nor enforcement alone will generate the level of public exposure necessary to reach the entire community unless you promote them. By working with the media, the impact of “Put It Down” will extend far beyond the actual contacts made during an event.

Earned Media

One of the most efficient and cost effective ways to reach a large audience is through “earned media.” Earned media is positive press coverage you actively work to get. By creating newsworthy stories or events, you can generate effective media coverage that targets specific audiences. Earned media is a powerful tool in spreading the word about “Put It Down.”

Key Messages

Your “Put It Down” campaign should communicate to the media that stopping distracted driving needs to be a priority. Specifically, communicate how drivers who engage in distracted driving behaviors are not only a danger to themselves, but to everyone else on the road around them. No one is immune!

Always remember the key persuasive arguments: drivers simply can’t do two things at once; young drivers are at great risk; and everyone has a role in stopping this deadly behavior. These are the main points that should be highlighted every time you deliver your “Put It Down” message to the media. Be consistent.

Generating Attention

There are numerous activities you can do to generate media attention. Among them are:

- Stage press events with creative visuals and news hooks;
- Mine your data for new stats and figures that demonstrate the dangers of distracted driving;
- Send letters-to-the-editor to your state and local newspapers or ask your partners to do so;
- Write opinion-editorials for your state and local newspapers or ask your partners to do so;
- Talk to your local radio stations to coordinate interviews during peak drive-time hours to discuss the dangers of distracted driving;
- Schedule editorial board meetings with state and local newspapers;
- Encourage local and state TV and radio stations to air Public Service Announcements (PSA).

Making Your News “Newsworthy”

Most people need to see a single media message at least three separate times before they can recall having seen the message at all. Repeated messages through different media channels are the most effective way to build public awareness for “Put It Down.” It is important to continually use the same theme, like “Put It Down,” when talking about your campaign, but also remember to always look for new, fresh ways to communicate this same message. You also will want to make your information as current and timely as possible. Here are some ideas to help generate media coverage and keep “Put It Down” in the spotlight.

- **Develop relationships with media professionals**—Get to know the reporters who cover feature, traffic, public safety, metro, legislation and police beats. Keep them up to date on “Put It Down” events and news.
- **Where have all the reporters gone?**— Keep in mind, traditional media has experienced significant downsizing over the past few years, so news agencies are stretched more than ever, making establishing relationships and having strong news essential.
- **Emergence of Social Media**— Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc) has made its way into our lives. Consider using these platforms to keep media informed.
- **Become a source**—Work with your “Put It Down” spokesperson so he or she understands the messages and goals of “Put It Down.” Then offer the spokesperson as a source to reporters who need information and quotes when covering distracted driving stories or crashes in your community.
- **Use your campaign partners as media resources**—National organizations, businesses and many advocacy groups have press offices or press personnel. Work with them to generate maximum coverage for “Put It Down.”
- **Invite the Media to become campaign partners**— Invite media outlets and professionals to join the “Put It Down” efforts. The more information the media has on distracted driving, the better. Some local television and radio stations may agree to partner with you as a public service. Ask media outlets to sponsor “Put It Down” activities such as, safety events, and to make announcements periodically during their programming.
- **Hold an event**—With the volume of news media has to cover today, hold events that are convenient for the media to get to, make sure they are at convenient times (before reporter’s deadlines), that they are visually compelling and most importantly, newsworthy.

What The Media Can Do

- Join the “Put It Down” partnership in your community.
- Implement distracted driving policies, like no texting or talking on hand-held cell phones, for employees.
- Serve on local task forces to assist in community efforts.
- Request that on-air traffic reports include distracted driving messages during their on-going reporting.

