

WORKING TOGETHER FOR SAFE COMMUNITIES



Safe Communities Kit

# WORKING WITH THE MEDIA



## Welcome to the Safe Communities Kit

This guide, *Working With the Media* forms part of a series of booklets published for inclusion in British Columbia's Safe Communities Kit. The Safe Communities Kit was developed to assist communities and individuals in preventing crime and enhancing safety across British Columbia.

Other Safe Communities Kit booklets include:

- ***An Overview of Crime Prevention and Community Safety Planning***
- ***Identifying Your Community's Crime Problem: A Guide to Needs Assessment***
- ***Getting Your Crime Prevention Strategies Underway: Project Planning Guide***
- ***Splash and Ripple: Using Outcomes to Design and Guide Community Justice Work***

All of these booklets are available on the Safe Communities Kit CD-ROM, and can be downloaded from the Community Programs Division Website at:

[www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/community\\_programs](http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/community_programs).

For more information contact:



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Policing and Community Safety Branch  
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
201 - 4180 Lougheed Highway  
Burnaby, BC V5C 6A7

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Facsimile: 604-775-2674

Toll-Free: 1-866-668-2137

e-mail: [SGCPD@gems2.gov.bc.ca](mailto:SGCPD@gems2.gov.bc.ca)

website: [www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/community\\_programs](http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/community_programs)



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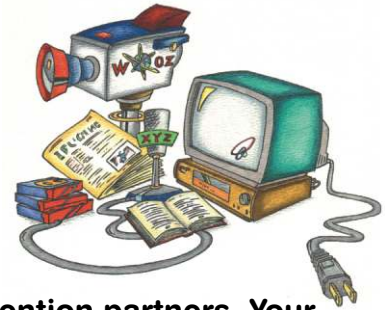
# Working Together For SAFE COMMUNITIES

**B.C.'s Provincial Safe Communities Working Group provided the expertise and advice needed to prepare this kit. The working group includes representatives from:**

- B.C. Block Parent Society
- B.C. Block Watch
- B.C. Coalition for Safer Communities
- B.C. Crime Prevention Association
- B.C. Association of Municipal Chiefs of Police
- B.C. Youth Police Network
- Children of the Street Society
- Community Programs Division, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
- B.C. Crime Stoppers
- B.C. Safe Schools and Communities Centre
- National Crime Prevention Centre
- RCMP "E" Division
- Union of B.C. Municipalities



# See The **BIGGER PICTURE**



**The news media is one of your most important crime prevention partners. Your relationship with the media will benefit you both—you are offering them interesting and relevant local stories and they are helping you spread the word and increase community involvement.**

Media outlets are an important part of your community. They care about the community and they want to provide information about activities that will benefit their readers, listeners and viewers.

The best way to work with the media is to understand what they want and need. This guide will introduce you to basic communications techniques and help you work more effectively with your local media.

Before you approach any media outlet, you need to know what they want and what you are offering. Editors, producers and news directors are always looking for positive local items that are of interest, but they are also very busy and they do not have a lot of staff. They need to be able to decide quickly if the story is of value before they commit resources to covering it.

- Once you know what you want to say, make sure you reach all media outlets:
- Draw up a list of community newspapers, cable and commercial television stations, and radio stations that serve your area.
- Make sure you include newspapers and radio stations that serve specific ethnic or cultural groups. Check with your local library for a copy of Bowdens Media Directory. In you are in the Lower Mainland, look through The Ad Pages, Vancouver's advertising directory published once a year in Business in Vancouver.
- Think about including college and university papers, as well as newsletters and bulletins published by churches, community groups, hospitals, etc.

## **So start out by determining exactly what you want to say. Do you want to:**

- Increase public awareness of community safety issues and concerns?
- Make sure that crime prevention is given the attention it deserves?
- Raise the profile of a particular project?
- Obtain support, such as donations of time, money and services?
- All of the above?

With so many different forms of communication available today (print, radio, television, computer bulletin boards, online news services, and e-mail), you have a wide range of options to choose from.





### Find out what the media needs and make sure you meet their needs:

- Call each media outlet and find out how you can get your story printed or broadcast.
- Find out where, by when, and to whom you should direct your information.
- Get to know their deadlines so you can be sure to meet them.
- If you are planning an event, submit items to media event calendars well in advance.
- Find out if there is a special section or show dedicated to crime and safety issues, such as the Vancouver Province weekly 'Crime and You' section.
- Stay in touch and provide regular updates to local reporters who specialize in crime and safety issues.

### Watch for opportunities to make your item as interesting as possible:

- Try to set up interesting activities to provide photo or film opportunities for television and newspapers or sound clips for radio.
- Identify visual opportunities in your media advisory.
- Try to involve community leaders or young people in your activities.

Don't wait to be called. Even when things are quiet and you are not asking for publicity, drop by to volunteer information, ideas or articles. Help the media develop personal interest feature stories about local people who are working on violence programs, researching a related topic, participating in victim support groups, etc.

Make sure you are available if reporters call you for facts and comments. If the call is unexpected, check the deadline and offer to call back with the answer. Always call back, even if you cannot come up with the answer.

Above all, respect their judgment. Don't complain if they choose not to pursue your story suggestion and don't waste their time with trivial issues. Never try to pass off a feature story as hard news. Write letters to the editor or offer to write guest columns if you want to present an opinion.

**Your material is more likely to be used if you meet the needs of the media—find out in advance what they are likely to print or air, and make sure you meet their deadlines!**





A partnership with the media may allow you to benefit from their communications and public relations expertise and at the same time allow them to show they care about the safety of their community. There are several ways to do this:

- Invite media owners and managers to participate as members of your project team or serve as resource people for your group.
- Include reporters who regularly cover crime and community safety issues on your guest list when you are planning special events, presentations or activities.
- Ask media personalities to participate in panel discussions and workshops on crime prevention and community safety issues.

Many local newspapers and radio and television stations look for opportunities to sponsor community events and campaigns that would be of interest and value to their audience. If you have an activity you would like to publicize, prepare a sponsorship proposal with complete background information about your activity and an explanation of why it is important to the community.

In a sponsorship arrangement, you can ask the newspaper or radio or television station for the following:

- Help in developing an ad to publicize the event.
- Free ad space in one of their issues or on the air.
- Free give-aways (e.g., ballpoint pens, caps, m u g s ) that you can distribute at the event.
- A reporter or photographer to cover the activity.

In return, you can offer to print their logo in your event materials (e.g., posters, programs, flyers) and mention their sponsorship during the activity.

### The 30-Second Clip

Electronic media are an important source of news and information so you gain a lot if you are able to give an effective radio or television interview. Keep in mind that electronic media cannot always tidy up your comments so make sure you are prepared and comfortable before you begin.

You create an impression the minute you open your mouth. It's like giving a speech, your voice and your appearance can make you sound hesitant or nervous when you want to appear confident or you may sound harsh when you want to show compassion.

It is especially important to stick with a simple message because both the interview and the resulting clip will be brief, and listeners cannot reread something they did not understand the first time through. Make sure you have two or three strong messages that can be spoken in 20 seconds or less.

Here are some other tips for a radio or television interview:

- Practise with a tape recorder or video camera so you can hear how you will sound or see how you will look.
- Speak slowly enough that you are understood clearly but not so slowly that you sound uncertain or dull.
- Dress conservatively for television. Dark colours generally look better than light colours. Avoid flashy jewellery or loud patterns that may distract viewers.
- Arrive early so you can relax before the interview. If you are rushed, you may sound defensive.
- Don't feel obliged to fill dead air. A reporter may leave an uncomfortable silence to try and lure you into a comment when you are best to remain silent.

Even if the interview is live, don't hesitate to ask the reporter to repeat a question you do not understand.

**Ask media personalities to participate in panel discussions and workshops on crime prevention and community safety issues.**



# Preparing News Releases

**A news release can be used to alert media to an event, report results or statistics, or outline what your project is doing. It helps you frame what you have to say and allows you to send the information immediately to a wide variety of media and partner organizations.**

It is important to determine the type of news release you are preparing. Here are some examples:

- A hard news release has time-sensitive information based on something such as a specific event or an urgent community safety problem.
- A feature news release is less time sensitive, and can include a profile of some of your volunteers or a background story about your work.
- Fillers, which can be used at any time, can include crime prevention tips or a quiz inviting readers or listeners to test their knowledge about community safety issues.

Issue a news release when the information is relevant—when you are presenting an award, starting a project or have reached a milestone. If you are promoting an event, send out a media advisory at least a week in advance so editors and news directors can plan coverage, then issue a short reminder just before the event. Have a news release at the event that you can also send to media who were unable to cover it in person.

## Write the news release in a clear and straightforward way.

- Use short sentences.
- Use the active voice.
- Use the past tense, unless what you are describing is not fixed to a particular event at a particular time.
- Don't use jargon.
- Keep it short.
- Use active, interesting quotes.

## Organize your ideas.

- List all the information you want to include in the order of priority.
- Check your facts, and use local statistics if possible.

- If you have a lot of background detail, attach it as a fact sheet.
- Always include a release date.
- Always provide a contact name and telephone number. Make sure someone will be available to return calls shortly after the release is issued.

## Prepare your lead paragraph carefully.

- Make it newsworthy. You need to catch the attention of the reader or listener.
- If you are making an announcement, mention the person or group making the announcement.
- Make sure there are no inconsistencies and that the release supports your lead paragraph.

## Formatting the release.

- Double-space the text.
- Print on only one side of the sheet.
- At the end of each page (except for the last), write the word "more". It should be centred below the last line of the text.
- Never end a page in the middle of a paragraph.
- Put the symbol "-30-" below the last line of text on the last page.
- Include contact information at the bottom of the last page (name and phone number of the media contact person in your group).

**Remember, a news release is a fact. If you want to present your opinion, write a letter to the editor or an opinion piece.**



# Preparing For An Interview

**If a reporter contacts you for an interview, offer to call him or her back so you have some time to prepare.**

## Make sure you obtain the following information:

- What is the deadline?
- Who is the reporter requesting the interview and what publication or program do they represent?
- What is the contact's phone number?
- What kinds of questions will you be asked? You will want to have a sense of the focus or theme of the interview.
- What is the interview format? By phone, in person, a panel discussion?
- Will it be videotaped or live?
- Will others be involved, or be interviewed for their comments?
- When, where, and how long will the interview be?



## During the interview itself, follow these guidelines:

- Be yourself.
- Set out three key points before the interview, and repeat them a number of times.
- Use clear, simple language.
- Keep your comments short and precise—no more than 20 seconds. There is a greater chance of being quoted accurately if a reporter can use your entire answer.
- Listen to the question. Never answer a question you don't understand. Always ask for clarification if you aren't sure of the meaning.
- Answer a multi-part question one step at a time. After you have answered one part, wait or ask to have the other parts repeated.
- Avoid jargon.
- Stick to the facts and correct the reporter if the facts presented are wrong.
- Answer only those questions about which you have direct knowledge—never guess.
- Don't be afraid to pause briefly before you answer a question.
- If possible, offer the reporter a short fact sheet with statistics or background on your project or activity.

**If you are seriously misquoted or there is an error in the news item that appears or is aired after the interview, ask the reporter for a correction and follow up with a letter to the station or newspaper, re-stating the correct information.**

## Make sure you obtain the following information:

- What is the deadline?
- Who is the reporter requesting the interview and what publication or program do they represent?
- What is the contact's phone number?
- What kinds of questions will you be asked? You will want to have a sense of the focus or theme of the interview.
- What is the interview format? By phone, in person, a panel discussion?



# Media Advisory Template

## Crime Prevention Event

Issue media advisories on the letterhead of your group so editors know where it originated.

### NAME OF GROUP

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*Release Date—at least one week in advance*

#### ATTENTION: ASSIGNMENT EDITORS

*(COMMUNITY NAME) — (Mayor or event leader) invites everyone to (nature of activity) on (date).*

*Consider including a relevant quote from a community leader or project spokesperson. See the examples on the following pages.*

*In (name of community) the event will take place:*

*Include as much detail as possible so media know when newsworthy events will take place, what visuals are possible and why they should arrange coverage. Advance notice also allows media to promote the activity to encourage participation by local residents.*

Date: XXXX

Time: XXXX

*Indicate specific time for activities, e.g. speeches by community leaders.*

Location: XXXX

*Indicate whether the event will be altered if there is bad weather.*

-30-

Media inquiries can be directed to:

*Make sure the contacts are available immediately after the advisory is issued.*

Contact name(s)

Title(s)

Phone numbers



# Local Media Advisory Sample 1

## Crime Prevention Event



4040 Gillian Avenue  
Burnaby, British Columbia  
Canada V2P 2A4  
Tel: 604|000|0000  
Fax: 604|000|0000

October 26, 2000

ATTENTION: ASSIGNMENT EDITORS

Burnaby -- The Central Burnaby Youth Action Team will be painting over graffiti outside the Joyce Street Skytrain station Thursday, Nov. 4 as part of Crime Prevention Week (Nov. 1 to 7).

"Crime Prevention Week is a time when everyone of every age can take part in activities that will keep their community safe," team spokesman George McEwen said. "We want to show the people of Burnaby that youth can make a positive contribution and help to keep our community safe."

Burnaby Mayor James Franklin, who will join the youth team, is challenging other Burnaby residents to bring along a paint brush and help out.

The team will be working:

Date: Thursday, Nov. 4

Time: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
(Mayor Franklin will be with the team from 10 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.)

Location: The youth team will begin at the Joyce Street Skytrain station, and then move to other nearby locations. If you miss them at the station, you can contact them by cell phone at 555-4321. They will be at work, rain or shine.

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Media inquiries can be directed to:  
George McEwen  
Central Burnaby Youth Action Team  
(604) 000-0000



# Local Media Advisory Sample 2

## Crime Prevention Event

South Turner  
Seniors Association

4040 Gillian Avenue  
Victoria, British Columbia  
Canada V2P 2A4  
Tel: 604|000|0000  
Fax: 604|000|0000

October 27, 2000

ATTENTION: ASSIGNMENT EDITORS

Victoria—The South Turner Seniors Association will honour one of its members and host an open house information session as part of Crime Prevention Week.

"Participants will learn about everything from safety on the street to avoiding fraud, as well as being shown how they can report suspicious activities in their neighbourhood," said Nancy Fernandes, president of the seniors association.

Mayor Lorraine Ingram will present a plaque to 101-year-old Joy Egilson who called police when she spotted a car break-in under way near her home last summer.

The event will take place:

Date: Friday, Nov. 5

Time: 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.  
Mayor Ingram will present the plaque at 2 p.m.  
Cst. Terri Junger will speak from 2:15 p.m. to 3 p.m.  
This will be followed by a social hour where volunteers from the community policing station will work with seniors one-on-one to answer their questions about personal and community safety.

Location: James Bay Community Centre  
1st Floor auditorium  
888 South Turner St.

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Media inquiries can be directed to:

Nancy Fernandes, President  
South Turner Seniors Association  
(250) 000-0000

Cst. Terri Junger  
James Bay Community Policing Station  
(250) 000-0000



# Local News Release Template Crime Prevention Event

Issue news releases on the letterhead of your group so editors know where it originated.

## NAME OF GROUP

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*(release date - at least one week in advance of event)*

#### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EVENT/PROJECT/ACTIVITY: LOCAL ACTIVITIES KEEP COMMUNITIES SAFE**

*Community name - (Name of group/organization) will be (brief, lively description of event/project/activity) as part of Crime Prevention Week (Nov. 1 to 7).*

*Active quote from participant/organizer/community leader related to the activity—could be a direct quote or a statement. Indicate whether community members can take part and outline how.*

*Insert paragraph with more detail about local activities and/or projects, including specific location and timing—and expected impact. Highlight local groups or individuals involved in crime prevention activities throughout the year.*

*Close with related background information e.g. special week, special date or other activities. See the examples on the following pages.*

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Media inquiries can be directed to:

*(Make sure the contacts are available immediately after the release is issued)*

Contact name(s)

Title(s)

Phone number(s)



# Local News Release Sample 1

## Crime Prevention Event



4040 Gillian Avenue  
Burnaby, British Columbia  
Canada V2P 2A4  
Tel: 604|000|0000  
Fax: 604|000|0000

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 1, 2000

### BURNABY YOUTH WILL PAINT OVER GRAFFITI DURING CRIME PREVENTION WEEK NOV. 1-7

BURNABY - Burnaby youth will be painting over graffiti outside the Joyce Skytrain station this Thursday, Nov. 4, as part of Crime Prevention Week (Nov. 1 to 7).

"It is amazing how a little paint and a lot of hard work can make a world of difference," said George McEwen, a member of the Central Burnaby Youth Action Team. "We want to show that we are willing to pitch in to improve the city's appearance, which in turn will keep Burnaby safe."

McEwen said the youth team would welcome help from anyone who wants to join them or tell them of other nearby locations with graffiti. "We are starting at the Joyce station but we will keep going until we run out of paint— and Ferguson Home Improvement has donated an awful lot of paint," he said.

Mayor James Franklin, who will be at the Joyce station to help out when the youth team starts painting at 10 a.m., praised the team's efforts. "Crime Prevention Week is a great time to remind everyone that there are lots of things they can do to help keep Burnaby safe throughout the year."

"Awareness and involvement are keys to preventing crime and keeping communities safe," Franklin said. "It could be as simple as keeping an eye out for anything suspicious when you are out for a stroll in your neighbourhood or making sure young people have enough recreational activities."

Crime Prevention Week in B.C. will build on greater public awareness made possible through distribution of the *Be Safe: Working Together for Safe Communities* guide earlier this year and through B.C.'s Safe Communities Day in August.

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Media inquiries can be directed to:

James Gray  
Communications Officer  
City of Burnaby  
(604) 000-0000

George McEwen  
Youth Action Team  
(604) 000-0000



# Local News Release Sample 2

## Crime Prevention Event

*James Bay*  
SENIORS SOCIETY

4040 Gillian Avenue  
Victoria, British Columbia  
Canada V2P 2A4  
Tel: 604|000|0000  
Fax: 604|000|0000

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 2, 2000

JAMES BAY SENIORS WILL LEARN ABOUT SAFETY  
DURING CRIME PREVENTION WEEK NOV. 1-7

VICTORIA - James Bay seniors will learn how to stay safe Friday (Nov. 3) at a community open house during Crime Prevention Week—and will also honour 101-year-old Joy Eglison who helped police nab a car thief earlier this year.

"Older people often feel trapped in their homes because they are afraid of becoming victims of crime," said Nancy Fernandes, president of the South Turner Seniors Association. "We want to show them how much they can do to keep themselves and their neighbourhood safe.

"We are especially delighted to recognize Joy Eglison who called police when she spotted a man trying to break into a car near her home last summer. Mrs. Eglison is proof that crime prevention and safe communities involve us all."

"Crime Prevention Week is a great time to remind everyone that there are lots of things they can do to help keep the James Bay community safe throughout the year," said Mayor Lorraine Ingram, who presented Mrs. Eglison with a plaque. "Awareness and involvement are keys to preventing crime and keeping communities safe. As Mrs. Eglison has proven, it could be as simple as keeping an eye out for anything suspicious in your neighbourhood."

Cst. Terri Junger and volunteers from the local community policing station joined the open house to talk about everything from safety on the streets to spotting telemarketing scams. Participants were invited to have tea or coffee donated by the City Centre Coffee House and talk to community policing volunteers who answered more specific questions about home and personal safety.

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Week in B.C. will build on greater public awareness made  
on of the Be Safe: Working Together for Safe Communities  
through B.C.'s Safe Communities Day in August.

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Media inquiries can be directed to:

Nancy Fernandes, President  
South Turner Seniors Association  
Victoria (250) 000-0000

Cst. Terri Junger  
James Bay Community Policing Station  
Victoria (250) 000-0000

*James Bay*  
SENIORS SOCIETY

**Here is a form you can use to compile a list of media contacts:**

## MEDIA Directory

MEDIA OUTLET: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE/FAX/E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: .....

DEADLINES OR SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIAL INTERESTS/FOCUS OF NEWS ITEMS TO DATE: .....

