

## Disseminating Air Quality Data: Tips to Holding a Successful Press Event

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The purpose of an air quality press event is to release the results to the media, coalition members, and policymakers. Press events allow all of the local media to hear the results at once from experts and advocates. Press events provide an opportunity to have results released for the first time in a way that explains the data and provides context so that it can be easily understood.

Press events should be no more than 20-30 minutes. They can take different forms depending on the community, from a more formal press conference to a less formal community coalition event in which the media are invited. They are typically held in a local convenient location (with accessible parking), and include speakers who explain the data (experts on AQ monitoring, experts on health effects of SHS (not firsthand smoking), a local community member (preferably a worker) affected by secondhand smoke, and a coalition representative/chair/media spokesperson. Preparation includes (a) developing a media advisory; (b) developing a press release; (c) compiling press packets for the media, and (d) creating graphs from the air quality report that are large enough to see.

If you have access to a public relations person in your community (i.e., hospital or health department), you can work with them in planning the press event, putting together the media advisory and sending it out to the media before the press event, and putting together media packets for the media and all those who attend the press event.

### Choosing a Location:

- The location needs to be easily accessible with easy parking.
- Great locations to hold a press event are: libraries, hospital press rooms, health departments, and community centers. You may want to avoid government buildings to keep the focus on the data and not on governmental action.

### Choosing a Day and Time:

- It is important to find the best day of the week and time of day that works for your local community and media deadlines.
- Pick a day that will attract the most local media coverage.
- Pick a day that coincides with media deadlines for papers, tv, radio.
- For a daily newspaper, it may be best to hold the press event on a Thursday so that it can make the weekend edition.

### Creating Graphs: Two Ways to Display at the Press Event

1. Foam Core Boards can be made at Kinko's or another printing company. Dimensions of the board are 35 by 23 inches. This may be costly and beyond your budget. The cost is usually \$80-\$100 per board. Subcontract money can be used to pay for these, as long as it is consistent with the community scope of work.
2. Projections of the graphs can be used instead if a computer, projector and screen are available.

**Identifying Speakers: (you will need someone to be the moderator of the press event who can introduce speakers, wrap up and field questions)**

- A person who can explain the purpose of the study, methods and results (Ellen or Heather)
- A respected local healthcare provider to explain the health effects of SHS (usually a heart or lung specialist is best)
- A community member or local worker affected in some way by secondhand smoke exposure (optional; critical to have a never smoker to keep the focus on the smoke and not the smoker!)
- A community advocate/coalition member who can do a call to action or provide contact information for those interested in getting involved (may also be the moderator).
- The coalition chair or leader will want to get a Save The Date message out to all coalition members as soon as a date has been chosen.
- It is important that the coalition members make phone calls to all coalition members and supporters the day before the event to ensure a good turnout.

**Talking Points for Speakers at the Press Event:**

- Talking points are short, simple phrases and statements individuals use to communicate their key messages.
- Please have talking points established before speaking with the media
- Choose individuals who are willing to talk to the media and who agree to stick to the talking points.

**Developing a Media Advisory:**

- A Media Advisory is a brief one-page document that provides the when, where, what (agenda including speakers), and why (a few facts about SHS) of the press event. The results are NOT included in this document. See template for example.
- The Media Advisory includes the contact information for your coalition in case the media want further information.
- **DO NOT provide any results or data from the report; just the details about the press event! The media advisory provides the 'hook' that will attract the media.**

**Developing a Press Release:**

- A Press Release is a document written for the media and on the coalition or organizational letterhead that includes a summary of the press event including the results of the air quality study. See template for example.
- This document is distributed at the press event and sent to media outlets AFTER the event (to those who don't attend the event).
- Include the Press Release in the Press Packet.
- The coalition may also want to send the press release to elected officials and coalition members AFTER the press event to notify them of the results (along with the final report).

**Compiling Press Packets: (make enough for all media representatives)**

- Agenda including speakers' names, affiliations, and topics
- Press Release summarizing the report's findings and implications for community action
- Air Quality Report (full unembargoed copy; see below)
- Surgeon General's Report 2010, Cover page- p. 3 only
- Other educational material on SHS (fact sheets) and SF policy (one pager on Kentucky laws)
- One-pager on the Smoke-free Kentucky campaign (emphasizing local and state laws)
- Brochure or one-pager on local coalition including contact information.
- It is recommended that the packets include only essential information and not be too extensive. Think about what your media needs to write a good story based on your community's level of readiness.
- If you make enough packets, you can share those with all attendees and send to elected officials after the event.

**Air Quality Reports Provided by the Kentucky Center for Smoke-free Policy**

- There are different versions depending on the purpose of the study. Some reports cover only pre-law data; others include pre- and post-law information. Some are specialty reports on select venues such as bingo halls.
- It is vital that the information from the reports is not disclosed until the press event. The AQ report is embargoed (i.e., private) until the press event. Please do not share the results with friends or coalition members.
- The Press Conference is to be an event, and the big draw is the exciting local information you are going to be releasing for the first time.

**Follow up after the Press Event:**

- Get earned/unpaid media 2-4 weeks after the initial release by writing letters to the editor, opinion editorials by key influential community leaders, pieces for church bulletins.
- Incorporate the findings in a paid media campaign (e.g, direct mail postcards, billboards, radio) 4-6 weeks after the earned media.
- Be sure you share the results with elected officials and incorporate in all communication with them.
- Incorporate findings into public presentations to community groups.
- Create a one-pager on the findings (we can provide a template) to include in all written materials.
- Post the full report and one-pager on the coalition website.

**For more information, contact UK Clean Indoor Air Partnership, (859) 323-9958 or by email at [hilarie.sidney@uky.edu](mailto:hilarie.sidney@uky.edu)**

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