



## Get Your Stories in the News

While publicizing the *Click It or Ticket/Operation ABC Mobilization*, you may find yourself talking to reporters from your local or regional media. Here are some tips for talking to reporters, articulating your message and maximizing its impact:

- **Give reporters something new to report.** Has a high school student in your community survived a crash because he or she was wearing a safety belt? How are high schools letting students know about the *Click It or Ticket Mobilization*? What are young people doing to encourage safety belt use? Look for stories to pitch to local reporters.
- **Present the facts.** Have your key facts in hand. Be ready to provide details, such as the number of young people in your state who were killed or seriously injured in crashes and were not wearing a safety belt. Use the charts and fact sheet in this planner.
- **Stick to the message.** Create Talking Points customized for your audience with the Talking Point Creator tab on the Buckle Up America Web site (from the [www.buckleupamerica.org](http://www.buckleupamerica.org) home page, click on Tools and then on the Talking Point Creator tab.)
- **Make it easy.** Send reporters the fact sheet and charts from this planner and other relevant information. Don't overload reporters – just make it easy for them to get what they need.
- **Ask for particulars.** When a reporter calls you, find out as much as you can about the story he or she is pursuing and the reporter's exact deadlines. You should have an idea of the issues you may need to address. If you need time to prepare, tell a reporter who caught you off guard that you will call right back – and make sure you do call back quickly.
- **Respect deadlines.** If you miss a reporter's deadline, you miss a chance to make your case. Try to respond quickly once you organize your thoughts. Many reporters decide what angle to pursue as the day progresses, essentially framing their story based on their earliest conversations. The earlier in the process you reach the reporter, the more impact you will have on the angle the story takes.
- **Stay "on the record."** Going "off the record" means different things to different reporters. Unless you are very experienced and know the reporter's practices very well, assume everything you say could make it into the paper and be attributed to you, even if you said it was "off the record."
- **Be honest.** If you don't know the answer to a question, don't be afraid to say "I don't know." If you can, tell the reporter you will find out the answer, then get back to him or her as soon as possible. Be sure never to mislead a reporter. More often than not, those who are not truthful get caught.
- **Control the interview.** Inject your key points and repeat them as necessary. Say, for example, "What people need know is ..." or "Something you should know is ..."
- **Be conscious of your position.** Never give your personal opinions while representing your organization.



## Sample Letter to the Editor

[insert date]

Letters to the Editor  
[insert newspaper name]

To the Editor:

Many people – especially teen-agers and young adults – still don't take one of the simplest and most effective steps to stay safe: Buckling up. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 59 percent of the passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes in 2002 – 32,598 men, women and children – weren't wearing safety belts.

Teen-agers and young adults are particularly at risk. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers and young adults in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Yet, 64 percent of 16- to 20-year-old passenger vehicle occupants killed or seriously injured in crashes in 2002 were not wearing a safety belt, according to NHTSA.

Sometimes the fear of getting a traffic ticket is the only reason that someone will wear a safety belt. That's why State and local law enforcement officers across the country are joining the national *Click It or Ticket/Operation ABC* (America Buckles Up Children) *November 2003 Mobilization* that runs from November 17-30. Officers will aggressively ticket unbelted drivers and passengers. High-visibility enforcement has proven effective in increasing safety belt use.

A similar *Mobilization* held in May helped convert 17 percent of safety belt non-users into users, increasing the national belt use rate to 79 percent from 75 percent.

Bottom line – law enforcement officers would rather write someone a ticket than find that same person dead or critically injured because he or she wasn't restrained in a crash.

Wear your safety belt every trip, every time – and encourage teen-agers and young adults to do the same. Or risk getting a ticket — especially November 17-30.

Sincerely,

[name]  
[job title and place of work – or, if you're a student, insert your school and grade]  
[city]