



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 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.