

## CONDUCTING A PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGN

Severe Weather Awareness Week is a group effort by state, federal and local agencies, volunteer organizations and concerned citizens to increase public awareness about preparedness and safety when severe weather strikes. This effort can be aided through local Public Information Campaigns in local communities.

Developing a local Public Information Campaign involves calling on key community groups to help. These include schools, businesses, fire and police departments and local media. The Chamber of Commerce and the area Councils of Government may want to join with you in sponsoring emergency preparedness activities in the community.

### **The Role of Your Local Media**

The media play a key role in emergency response, recovery, preparedness and mitigation. News outlets provide crucial information when emergencies strike and help to publicize recovery programs after disasters. Newspapers, radio and TV stations can be very helpful in educating the public before a disaster.

Sample press releases and public service announcements (PSAs) are made available to you in this publication. You may rewrite them to tailor them to your local situation, and distribute them to local media outlets.

You can contact your local broadcasters and offer interviews with guest experts on weather safety. TV stations frequently need guests to fill slots on early morning or weekend shows. Radio talk show hosts may welcome the chance to interview your weather safety experts. You can arrange visits to the editorial department of your local newspaper to gain print coverage.

Experts may include representatives of the local or regional Red Cross, The Salvation Army, emergency management office, National Weather Service or Fire Department rescue team. You may want to have your expert write an opinion piece to be submitted to the newspaper. Letters to the editor also are appropriate.

Local newspaper and broadcast reporters can work with you to develop feature stories on a variety of weather safety issues. An example would be a feature describing the areas that are especially risky during storms, including low-water crossings, mobile home parks, golf courses, sports fields, outdoor tennis and basketball courts.

### **Partnering with Local Businesses**

Grocers, hardware store owners and other merchants in your community may be invited to put preparedness messages on shopping bags, store windows or marquees outside their stores. They may want to work with you to set up displays inside their stores featuring key items shoppers might need as they put together a family emergency supply kit.

**How Schools and Teachers Can Help**

School districts and teachers may be interested in sponsoring projects involving severe weather preparedness. Children might design flyers or write papers on severe weather safety. Children's artwork with severe weather safety themes could be displayed in local malls, airports, libraries or public buildings. Local merchants might be interested in sponsoring contests on weather preparedness in the schools and donating prizes for kids.

**Enlisting Civic-minded Organizations**

You could interest your local fire department, police department or emergency management organization in hosting a weekend event highlighting severe weather safety. Local volunteer groups and civic organizations may want to join in. Restaurants or fast-food chains may want to donate refreshments for such events.

If there are local events or fairs at this time in your community, you could ask permission to set up a table featuring severe weather preparedness publications. To order a variety of emergency preparedness publications, contact the Public Information Office of the Governor's Division of Emergency Management at (512) 424-2138. Also see GDEM's Web site at [www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem).