



Media Guide for Worldwide Organizers

Types of Media

Media ownership and coverage varies from country to country. **It's critical to adapt these suggestions to the situation in your country.** Generally there are two major ways to get press coverage for your organization's message or Earth Day event: **paid media** (advertisements that you purchase for television, radio, newspapers, magazines, or Internet) and **earned media** (publicity that you do not pay for, such as newspaper articles and television and radio stories). This checklist deals exclusively with earned media.

Earned media is one of the most effective ways of raising public awareness about your project, campaign, or event. Unlike paid advertising, this type of publicity is also something that any organizer can generate, no matter how limited your budget is! All it takes is consistency, some understanding of how the media in your country works and hard work.

- Most media outlets get much more information than they can possibly use. It is important to present your information in concise, interesting, well-organized, and visually appealing ways, with a consistent, easy-to-recognize style.
- Most important, work to establish personal relationships with members of your local media. Find a spokesperson who brings good, established media relations to your team—or at a minimum, a good "people person" who is knowledgeable about your issue and message and can communicate effectively with reporters and members of the general public.

Message: What is the one thing you want people to know about your organization, issue or event? Maybe it is your connection with the worldwide Earth Day 2001 campaign. It could be the theme of your event. Perhaps it is one fact that beautifully illustrates the importance of your issue. Whatever it is, that one thing you want people to know and remember about you is your "message" and should be included in every press release, every quote to a reporter, every piece of material you produce – just like your logo.

Repetition is key - a person needs to hear your message 7-10 times before it starts to stick. Craft a message that people will remember when they hear it. Be very disciplined and repeat it at absolutely every opportunity. At the point that you think you can't bear to repeat your message one more time, people are just beginning to hear it.

What to Give the Media

Materials you prepare for the media can come in many forms. Below are some of the most common and effective ways to inform the press about your activities. Follow these simple steps for an effective media campaign.

Media Advisory

An advisory is generally used to alert the media that some sort of event will be taking place. It is a simple communication that goes to media in advance of the event and answers general questions: **when** and **where** the event will be held, **what** will happen, **who** is involved.

A media advisory should:

- Be on your organization's letterhead
- Include a contact name and phone number
- Be no more than one side of a page long
- Include a general description of the event, followed by logistical information
- Conclude with a "boilerplate" description of your organization for context (**boilerplate** consists of one or two sentences that reporters can use to describe your organization)
- Have "-30-" or "###" at the bottom to signify the end of the advisory.

***Please see the end of this document for an example of a media advisory.**

Press Release

A press release is used as an announcement (not to convey logistical details for an event – see media advisory, above) or as a means to convey your point of view. You might use a press release to announce the release of a study your organization has conducted, to respond to someone else's research or comments, or to announce events. You could issue a press release to let the media know that you have partnered with a local organization, government agency or prominent official to sponsor your Earth Day event. In short, a press release is used to give the media any information you think they might find interesting or newsworthy.

Press releases should:

- Be on your organization's letterhead
- Include a contact name and phone number
- Be no more than two sides of a page (short is best!)
- Alternate paragraphs that give factual context with short, pithy quotes from interesting spokespeople that deliver your message and your point of view
- Conclude with a boilerplate description of your organization for context
- Have "-30-" or "###" at the bottom to signify the end of the advisory.

***Please see the end of this document for an example of a press release.**

Setting up your media program

1) The list

Compile a media list, or obtain a current one from one of your partner organizations. If you find yourself compiling the list yourself, check your local public information sources – such as libraries, public relations or advertising agencies, government information services, phone books – they will often have lists of local media you can copy. Don't forget to use your personal contacts to assist in finding media contacts as well. Then call each media outlet to find out which reporter is most likely to cover your issue or event.

Your **media directory** should contain:

- Media outlets in your region, including the content and style of radio and t.v. programs, newspaper columns, and their deadlines
- An up-to-date list of reporters and editors and how to contact them by phone, fax, and email, if available

Be sure to keep your media file current. Contacts may change as often as every two to three months.

2) Establishing relationships

Get to know your local media. Once you establish which reporters cover the environment and/or events, introduce yourself with a phone call or a get-to-know-you meeting.

Be prepared – assemble a **press kit** of important background materials.

- Your press kit could include a calendar of events, information from Earth Day Network such as the Clean Energy Agenda or other worldwide Earth Day events, Earth Day Network's mission, Earth Day history, web site address, a press release about your event or projects, any press clippings you might already have, and fact sheets on your group.
- Keep your materials consistent, professional and short! Remember to include your (and/or Earth Day Network's) logo and message on all materials. Reporters may use any or all of the content you provide them with when they write, report or tape their stories. Check your materials with a critical eye – do they accurately reflect your mission and message? Will readers or viewers understand and remember your message? Will your materials and message excite people and get them involved?

Time with reporters is never wasted, even if they don't write or cover a story right away. When you establish relationships with reporters, you are investing in their future coverage of your issue or event. The more informed a reporter is, the more accurate the story s/he eventually writes or reports on will be. If you are respectful of a reporter's time and interests, and you provide valuable, relevant information that they can use, you are establishing yourself as a source for that reporter – and good sources are hard to find.

3) **Maintaining the flow of information**

Once you have made contact with members of your local media, maintaining a positive working relationship is a high priority. Here are some suggestions for ongoing communications with your media contacts:

- Be as helpful and accessible as possible.
- Provide background information when a relevant news story breaks.
- Participate in relevant editorial board meetings or community meetings, especially when members of the media are expected to be there.
- Conduct background briefings for reporters, giving them information about your organization/coalition, the specific event, how it relates to other events around the world. Answer any questions they may have, especially when you are about to make an announcement or hold an event.
- It is appropriate to send along interesting materials or articles you come across, but **ONLY** if you know the material is relevant to what the reporter is interested in. Include a personal note. NEVER inundate reporters with information they don't want or have no use for.

Don't hesitate to follow-up with a phone call to reporters to make sure they received any materials that you faxed, emailed or mailed to them. This gives you another opportunity to talk with them and answer any questions they may have. But be respectful of their time – reporters work on deadline, and often will not have time to talk.

Day of Event Coverage, Step by Step

- 1) **Make sure your media list is in order.** Hopefully you have established relationships with reporters who are likely to cover your event. Remember that often reporters are assigned to stories only a day or a few hours in advance, so be prepared to meet some new reporters at your event.
- 2) **Try to get some advance coverage for your event.** Talk to reporters you know and ask them if their outlet might consider doing a story before the actual event. Think of good angles that might interest readers, listeners or viewers. Is there a good human interest story? Is there someone interesting who has volunteered at your event over the past several years? Feature stories are a good bet for advance media, because the event itself is not “news” until it actually happens. You might also get some advance publicity if there are public service aspects to having the event announced by the media beforehand (for example, if the streets in a part of town are going to be closed for your environmental fair). It is never too early to start talking about your event to reporters. Get them thinking about what a great story it is going to be. Remember that they spend their days talking to other people - pretty soon the word will be all around town.

- 3) **Craft your media advisory** (see above for details, and the end of the document for an example). Your media advisory should go to all local calendar editors **one month in advance** of your event – call to follow up and make sure they received it. Some will ask you to re-send it when you are closer to the day of the event – make a note and re-send it when appropriate.

Send your advisory out to all local media outlets at least one month in advance of the event, and then **again one week before the event**. The advisory should go to reporters you have relationships with, reporters who usually cover the environment or events, and to a general assignment editor at each media outlet (you don't need the specific name of the editor, it will change frequently). Send it to the local bureaus of the wire services (like BBC, Agence France Presse, Reuters) or other media agencies in your country. Remember that many television and radio stations will not assign a reporter until the day before the event. Again, call to follow up and verify that the appropriate people have received the advisory. Be prepared to re-fax.

- 4) **Craft your press release** (see above for details and the end of this document for an example). It should include quotes by prominent local leaders, delivering the message of your event and talking about how great the event is going to be, and what it means for the community and the bigger picture. Intersperse the quotes with factual paragraphs estimating the attendance and giving other important contextual information about the event. Send the release out several days before the event. As always, call to follow up and be prepared to re-fax.
- 5) **The day before the event and the morning of the event (if possible) call your local media outlets to see if they are planning on covering the event.** Have your advisory and release handy to re-fax. Don't be surprised if you end up talking with a general assignment editor you've never spoken with before. Make your statement quickly, find out if they are planning on covering the event, and move on to your next call. At this point all you are doing is final verification of your press attendance – all your legwork previous to this call is what will get you the coverage you deserve.
- 6) **Have a media area at the event.**

- Make sure it is clearly identified with signs whenever possible, and that your advisory, release and follow up have all been explicit about where the media area will be. It is best to have it right at the entrance to the event.
- Have press kits with information about the event ready for reporters.
- Make sure you collect a business card from all reporters or have them sign in so you can follow up with them later and make sure that they have all the information they need.
- It can also be very helpful to have articulate, informed volunteers ready to help reporters find exactly the information or spokespeople they are looking for. Have your spokespeople prepared to talk to the media so that reporters can get their interviews as efficiently as possible. It is important to have a diverse group of spokespeople available and willing to talk to the press – local elected officials, business people, environmental activists, teachers,

parents, youth, grandparents. They each have a unique view of why your event or issue is important to the community;

- Both the press coverage and your relationships with reporters will be enhanced by such thorough preparedness.

7) **Follow up with reporters.**

Make sure that the reporters got all the information and interviews they need. Your professionalism and attention to their needs will be greatly appreciated.

ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATIONS OPPORTUNITIES

Editorial Boards

Many newspapers have a board of writers that decide what positions the paper will take on a multitude of different issues. Editorial boards decide which local – and national – political candidates and issues to endorse and whether or not to support specific environmental solutions. They can also choose to write editorials supporting Earth Day and urging readers to take environmental actions in observance of Earth Day.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

The public service announcement (PSA) can be a great way to get your message out. Since PSAs are considered a service to the community and not an advertisement, many radio and television stations will run them free of charge.

PSAs provide clear, concise answers to the who, what, when, where, why and how of your event. There are generally four different lengths:

- 10 seconds (25 words)
- 20 seconds (50 words)
- 30 seconds (75 words)
- 60 seconds (150 words)

If you provide all four versions, the station can decide which one(s) to use. Good PSAs will mention the name, theme and/or telephone number of your group or event twice, so listeners will be more likely to remember the information.

If you are planning to try to place PSAs with your local media, remember that you should get the announcement to a station's equivalent of the Public Affairs Director at least two weeks – and preferably up to eight weeks – in advance. Whether or not you want to develop an extensive PSA strategy, keep your local media in mind – stations are often happy to include your event information on their “listener hotlines”. There are samples of PSAs running in the US at the end of this document.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor in newspapers are a public forum that can call attention to your organization both before and after your event. Contact your local newspaper(s) to find out if they accept letters, their length restrictions, and where to send them. Encourage volunteers and community

leaders to write letters about the importance of Earth Day, the specific issues of your campaign, and highlighting your event.

Cable Access Television

Cable access television, where available, is cheap to access and easy to use. Consider organizing a couple of volunteers to spend a half-hour each week doing a show highlighting your Earth Day project or activity.

Regional Events Calendar

Find out if the media in your area provide a calendar of events that are likely to be of interest to their readers, viewers, or listeners. When you contact your local media to find out when they prefer to receive information about your event, give them a list of dates and events happening in your area. You might also direct them to the calendar feature of the Earth Day Network web site (www.earthday.net) if information for your Earth Day events are listed there. If your local area does not have a lot of events listed, consider compiling the events yourself as a service to the calendar editors.

Coordinating with Earth Day Network & the Earth Day 2001 campaign

Contact Vickery Prongay at Earth Day Network at vickery@earthday.net or +1 206 876 2002 with any questions you may have about getting publicity for your event. We have a wide range of resources available, including an interactive listserv dedicated to event organizing, materials, press lists, and contacts throughout the world who are also working on environmental protection issues.

Sample Media Advisory

[organization letterhead]

Media Advisory

Date

Contact: Name, Affiliation
Phone

EARTH DAY 2001 EVENTS TO DRAW 40,000

Earth Day UK will feature clean energy technologies; interactive fun for the whole family

London—Celebrate Earth Day at an exciting eco-festival featuring flocks of seagulls on stilts, a recycled instrument band, and a visiting 50-foot inflatable whale! Other activities include a treasure trail, a recycled kite festival and new exhibits along with the permanent environmental installations.

This year will be the biggest ever Earth Day. Join us at the Millennium Dome in London for an educational and fun day!

WHAT: Eco-festival, featuring food & entertainment, a children's area, clean energy technologies and much more!

WHEN: Saturday, 22 April 2001
10 AM until 10 PM

WHERE: Millennium Dome, Greenwich, London, United Kingdom

SPONSORS: Department of the Environment
Millennium Commission
Thames Water

Earth Day UK is a local coalition of concerned organizations, government agencies, families, teachers, elected leaders and sustainable businesses that works to increase public awareness of environmental issues through annual Earth Day events and activities. Earth Day UK is a member of Earth Day Network, the international organization coordinating Earth Day 2001 events worldwide. For more information, visit [insert your web address here] or for worldwide Earth Day information please visit www.earthday.net.

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Sample Press Release

[organization letterhead]

For Immediate Release

Date

Contact: Name, Affiliation
Phone

30-DAY COUNTDOWN TO EARTH DAY OFFICIALLY KICKS OFF WORLDWIDE CAMPAIGN

More than 30 groups around the world release details of their events for Earth Day 2001

Seattle, WA, USA – Earth Day Network today officially kicked off the 30-day countdown to the thirtieth anniversary of Earth Day, with major partners around the world announcing plans for Earth Day 2001. From France to China, organizers announced details of the rallies, fairs, conferences, and other events that will be held in April 2001 to raise awareness of environmental issues, especially the need for clean energy. Hundreds of millions of people across the planet are expected to celebrate Earth Day 2001.

“Earth Day 2001 marks the 30th anniversary of the first Earth Day and also heralds the beginning of a new millennium,” said Denis Hayes, National Coordinator of the first Earth Day and Chair of Earth Day Network. “Earth Day has always been about everyday people taking action in their own communities for a cleaner, healthier environment. This year, with hundreds of millions of people around the world participating in the biggest Earth Day yet, we will take real steps toward a cleaner, healthier environment for our future.”

Highlights of Earth Day events around the world include:

- **United Kingdom:** Earth Day UK’s Eco-Festival at the renewably-powered Millennium Dome near **London** will feature green musical acts, educational road shows, community workshops, and interactive programs and exhibits.

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- **United States:** Leonardo DiCaprio will host EarthFair 2001 on 22 April at the National Mall in **Washington, DC**. The event will feature celebrity entertainment and interactive exhibits powered completely with clean energy.
- **Poland:** A fair and picnic will be held at Pola Mokotowskie Park in **Warsaw** on April 30th. The event, which will cap a month of Earth Day activity on the clean energy theme, will involve 60,000 people.
- **Italy:** As part of Legambiente's "Cities Without Cars" campaign, cars will be blocked from the centers of 150 Italian cities on April 8th and 9th to draw attention to air pollution. In **Rome**, more than 100,000 people are expected to attend an open-air festival held in a blocked-off area near the Colosseum.
- **China:** The Earth Day 2001 China coalition, the first NGO coalition in the country's history, is coordinating a series of events for Earth Day. The coalition's Green Life Signature Campaign will ask thousands of people to pledge to make 12 lifestyle changes for the environment. On Earth Day, a ceremony in downtown **Beijing** will feature a display of all the Green Life Signature pledges, along with speeches and a photo exhibit.
- **South Africa:** *groundWork* is coordinating an Earth Day campaign to demand a national transition to cleaner oil refinery practices and to clean energy technologies. On April 22nd, a rally in **South Durban** will bring together residents affected by polluting oil refineries.
- **India:** Hundreds of children will present a "Children's Clean Air Manifesto" to India's First Lady in a ceremony in **New Delhi**. The Manifesto and a Children's Bike Rally will draw attention to the need for clean transportation alternatives.

Earth Day first went international in 1990, when 200 million people in 141 countries participated in activities around the world. Ten years later, Earth Day is poised to be the largest organized environmental event in human history. The 30 statements in honor of the kick off of the 30-day countdown to the 30th anniversary of the Earth Day are available at www.earthday.net. To find out about events in your city or country, or for information about the 4500 organizations in 181 countries that are part of Earth Day Network, please visit www.earthday.net.

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Sample Radio PSAs

Call your local radio stations to introduce yourself and find out whether they would be willing to run some PSAs announcing your event. If they are willing to work with you, you will need to arrange production logistics including who will do the voiceover. Have some sample PSA scripts that deliver your message ready.

Below are the scripts for the radio PSAs that Earth Day Network has produced. Feel free to work from these scripts if appropriate. You can use the voiceover portion at the end (where an on-air personality at the radio station could read more information for you) to give details such as the location and time of your event.

:30 RADIO

Hi, this is Edward James Olmos. 30 years ago the first Earth Day started the ball rolling. Today we have laws that protect our air and water, and every year we recycle more and more. But global warming is still getting worse. On April 22 you have a chance to change that, as a half billion people around the world come together to participate in the biggest Earth Day ever. Join us. Together, we can make a world of difference.

ANNCR/VO: To find out more, visit www.earthday.net.

:15 RADIO

Hi, this is Edward James Olmos. The decisions we make today regarding the environment are really for our children. So join us this Earth Day as a half billion people around the world come together to make sure the decisions we make are the right ones.

ANNCR/VO: To find out more, visit www.earthday.net

:30 RADIO

Hola, les habla Eduardo Jaime Olmos. Hace 30 años que el primer Día de la Tierra empezó la campaña para salvar nuestro planeta. Hoy en día tenemos leyes que protegen nuestro aire y nuestra agua y cada año reciclamos más y más. Pero el Calentamiento Global sigue empeorando. Pero el 22 de abril tienes la oportunidad de cambiar todo eso, úniendote a medio billón de personas alrededor del mundo para participar en el Día de la Tierra.

Anncr / VO: Para saber más, www.earthday.net

:15 RADIO

Las decisiones que nosotros hacemos hoy acerca del medio ambiente son verdaderamente para nuestros hijos. Acompañenos este Día de la Tierra cuando medio billón de personas alrededor del mundo se unen para asegurarse que las decisiones que tomemos sean las correctas.

Anncr / VO: Para saber más, visita al www.earthday.net