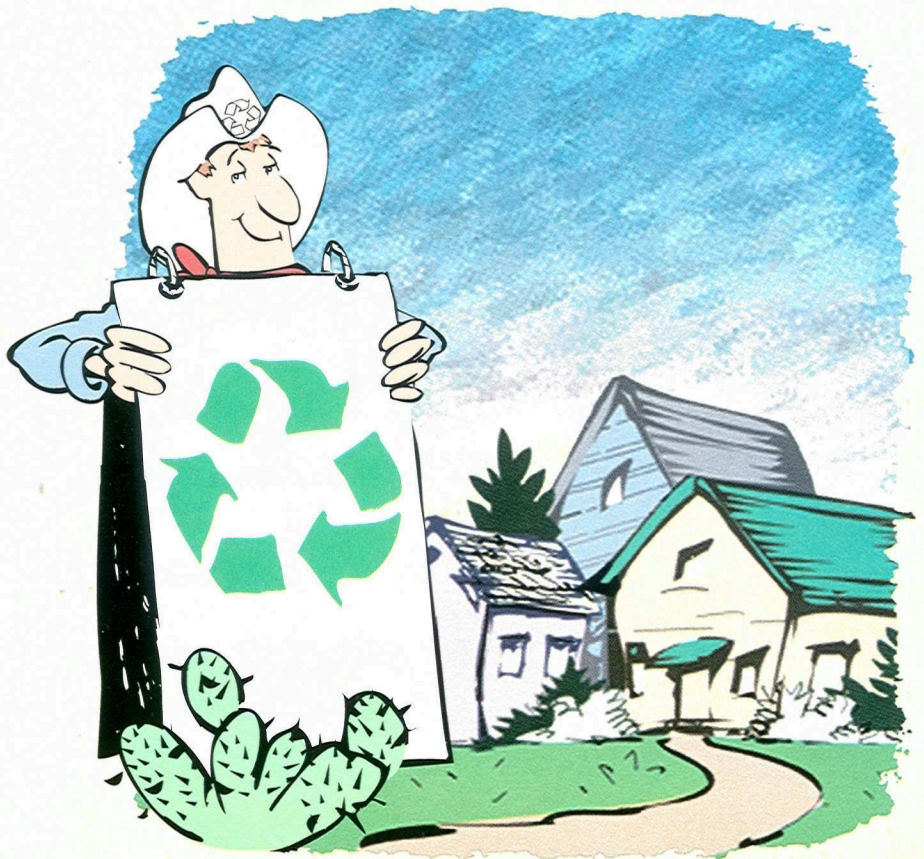


An Advertising  
and Public  
Relations



Handbook

# How to Promote Your Community Recycling Program

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Effective Communication

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## About This Guidebook

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The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) and Clean Houston have published this guidebook as part of a wider role in assisting local governments in solid waste management. It provides tips and ideas for promoting a recycling program, but is not intended to be all-inclusive. We encourage you to be creative in developing a promotion unique to your community's needs.

This guidebook is one of many projects that H-GAC and Clean Houston have undertaken. For information on other H-GAC resource materials and waste reduction projects, call the H-GAC offices at 713/627-3200.

## Introduction

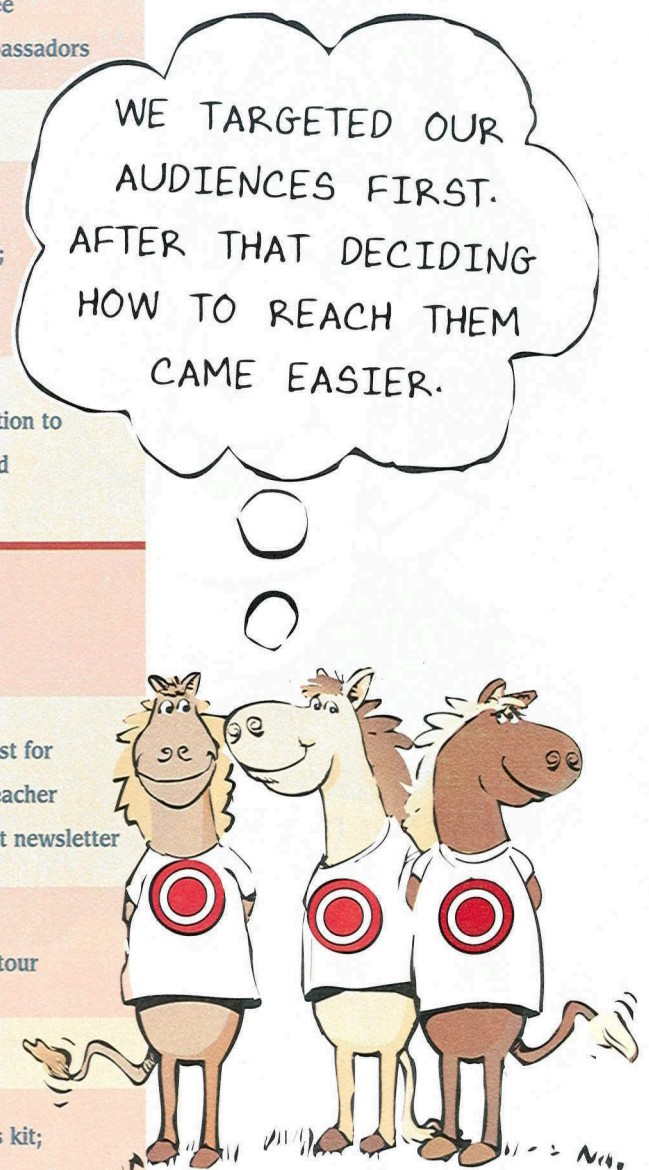


HOWDY! I'M TEX TRASHNOT,  
SPOKESPERSON FOR CLEAN TOWN.  
MAYBE YOU HAVEN'T HEARD  
OF CLEAN TOWN - IT'S A  
SMALL, IMAGINARY TEXAS  
TOWN IN THE HEART OF THE  
HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA.  
WE JUST KICKED OFF A  
COMMUNITY RECYCLING  
PROGRAM WITH GREAT  
RESULTS - IT'S THE TALK  
OF THE TOWN. SOME SAY  
WE DID A GOOD JOB  
PROMOTING THE PROGRAM,  
SO THE FOLKS AT THE  
HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA  
COUNCIL AND CLEAN HOUSTON  
ASKED ME TO SHARE SOME OF OUR  
COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES AND  
PROMOTIONAL IDEAS WITH YOU. I'LL BE  
YOUR GUIDE THROUGHOUT THIS BOOK.

# Target Audiences and Communication Tactics

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	Key Audience	Communication Tactic
Internal	City Public Works Dept.	Memos and updates; articles in employee newsletter; workshop for volunteer ambassadors
	City Administration Depts.	Memos and updates; newsletter articles
	Police and Fire Depts.	Memos and updates; newsletter articles; workshop for volunteer ambassadors
	Elected Officials	Presentation at council meetings; invitation to press conference, media facility tour and first-day truck route rides
External	Neighborhood Association	Block leader training workshop
	Schools	Recycling program mascot design contest for students; presentations to parent and teacher groups; press releases for school district newsletter
	Environmentalists	Invitations to press conference, facility tour
	Public-at-large	Advertising; publicity; kick-off event
	News Media	Press conference and facility tour; press kit; recycling truck route rides on start-up day; alerts on kick-off event; press releases and alerts



## The Basics of Effective Communication

3

THE OBJECTIVE  
OF OUR  
PROMOTION WAS  
TO ANSWER WHO,  
WHAT, WHY,  
WHERE, WHEN  
AND HOW.

S

imply put, effective communication answers who, what, why, where, when, and how. For a recycling program: Who gets the message? What needs to be said? Why should people recycle?

Where is the service area? When will the program start? How will the program work?

Concentrate on answering these questions, and you'll make the job of promoting your recycling program easier and your communications more complete and effective.



**Publics Come in Many Varieties.** "The general public" actually includes many smaller "publics," and each one may require a different communication strategy. For simplicity, try dividing your publics into "internal" and "external" groups.

Internal publics can include employees in your own department. All other departments of your government may be considered one internal public, or you may want to further divide them by their level of "public interface." The fire and police departments, for instance, interact constantly with citizens. Elected officials can form still another internal public.

People within your internal publics can become "recycling ambassadors" to help you spread the word about your program. If you keep them informed, many will serve as information resources to their neighbors and to others in the community at large.

External publics include opinion leaders (such as leaders of environmental groups and civic organizations), neighborhood associations, parent-teacher groups and media representatives. The number and variety of external publics varies from community to community. Concentrate your communications efforts on the groups that have the most potential to spread the news about your program.

#### **Communication Strategies Come in Four Varieties.**

You have four basic strategies — community relations, public relations, media relations and advertising — from which to choose. Combine them to create the "right mix" for your recycling program's communication needs.

*Community relations* refers to activities and communications aimed at community groups. Mostly, community relations involves personal communications — people talking to people.

A workshop to train neighborhood volunteers is an example of a community relations tactic. Here you could provide information about the recycling program and give volunteers printed materials and ideas on how to get their neighbors to participate.

Tours of the recycling facility are another example of a community relations tactic. You could invite leaders of local environmental groups, civic organizations, women's clubs, parent-teacher groups and the like. A well-planned and executed tour can get these opinion leaders excited and sold on your program.

School contests are also a good community relations tactic.

You can challenge elementary school kids to create a theme for your recycling program or design a mascot. These contests can build enthusiasm for recycling and help make the public more receptive when your official communications begin.

*Public relations* is an umbrella term that covers many communication activities, but for our purposes here, public relations refers to communications and activities aimed at the entire community.

Kick-off events or parades are examples of public relations tactics. For instance, you could invite the entire town to "Rally 'Round Recycling" at a kick-off pep rally.

TAKE THE FIRST  
STEP. APPOINT A  
COORDINATOR TO  
PLAN THE PROMO-  
TION AND SERVE  
AS THE OFFICIAL  
SPOKESPERSON FOR  
THE RECYCLING  
PROGRAM. JUST AS  
WE APPOINTED TEX  
TO SERVE AS  
SPOKESPERSON FOR  
THIS GUIDEBOOK,  
YOU'LL FIND YOUR  
PROMOTION WILL  
RUN MORE  
SMOOTHLY IF YOU  
PLACE ONE PERSON  
IN CHARGE.



## Printed Materials Are Like Automobiles

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How much does a car cost? As we all know, it depends on the model and the options. It's much the same with printed materials.

"Luxury car" brochures come printed on expensive paper with color photographs. "Economy car" brochures are printed with black ink only on cheap paper. As with a new auto purchase, it pays to shop around when you decide to produce printed materials.

Printed materials have four production elements in common: copywriting; design and layout; illustration/photograph; and printing. Ask for prices on each. And remember, the price goes up with each ink color you add.

Naturally, the more you can do "in house," the more you will save. But you have to weigh the savings against the quality of writing and design.

One word to remember about printed materials is consistency. Once you design a "look," repeat it in all your materials. This will give your promotions a unified, "one voice" appearance and will increase the recognition level of your program.

Contests and prize drawings also make good public relations tactics. Hold drawings to give away free home recycling centers — get local retailers involved as registration places. Retailers can also help with contest displays. Fill a giant see-through plastic bag with aluminum cans for a Guess-the-Number-of-Cans-and-Win Contest. Public relations events can draw attention to your program and position recycling as a positive and fun thing to do.

*Media relations* refers to communications and activities aimed toward members of the press. Pay special attention to formulating your media relation tactics. Your information must be correct, and the timing of its release is critical.

Press releases and press conferences are common media relations tactics. They work effectively when the information presented is concise and visually appealing. Other media relation tactics can include special press tours of the recycling facility and rides on recycling trucks. Tours and rides provide reporters an opportunity to "get the feel" of the recycling story and develop enthusiasm for the program.

You will find more information — and a sample press release and media alert — in Chapter 3 "Getting the Word Out."

*Advertising* refers to paid messages. Roadside billboards, radio and television commercials and newspaper ads can help support your other communications efforts.

Advertising and printed materials can easily take the lion's share of your promotional budget.

**Developing a Budget Forces You to Set Priorities.** Promotional ideas usually outdistance available funds. You may find yourself choosing between the kick-off event and the school contest; the snazzy brochure and those television ads; or the clever press release delivered in an aluminum can and the workshop for volunteers. Each idea will carry a price tag. That's why you need to set your budget early in the planning process.

**Special Events Require Detailed Attention.** Recycling rallies, parades and other events can dramatize the beginning of your recycling program. They provide good opportunities for media coverage. But special events require careful planning to keep costs down.

Cost considerations include rental for meeting space, printed materials and other hand-out items, rental of speaker podium, chairs, tables, audio-visual equipment, printing of banners or signage and custodial service for clean-up afterward. Make a detailed list as you plan and shop prices for items you must rent or purchase.

**Advertising Adds Impact.** Think of advertising as something that smooths out the bumps in your promotion. It fills in the gaps by reaching people not covered by your other communication efforts.

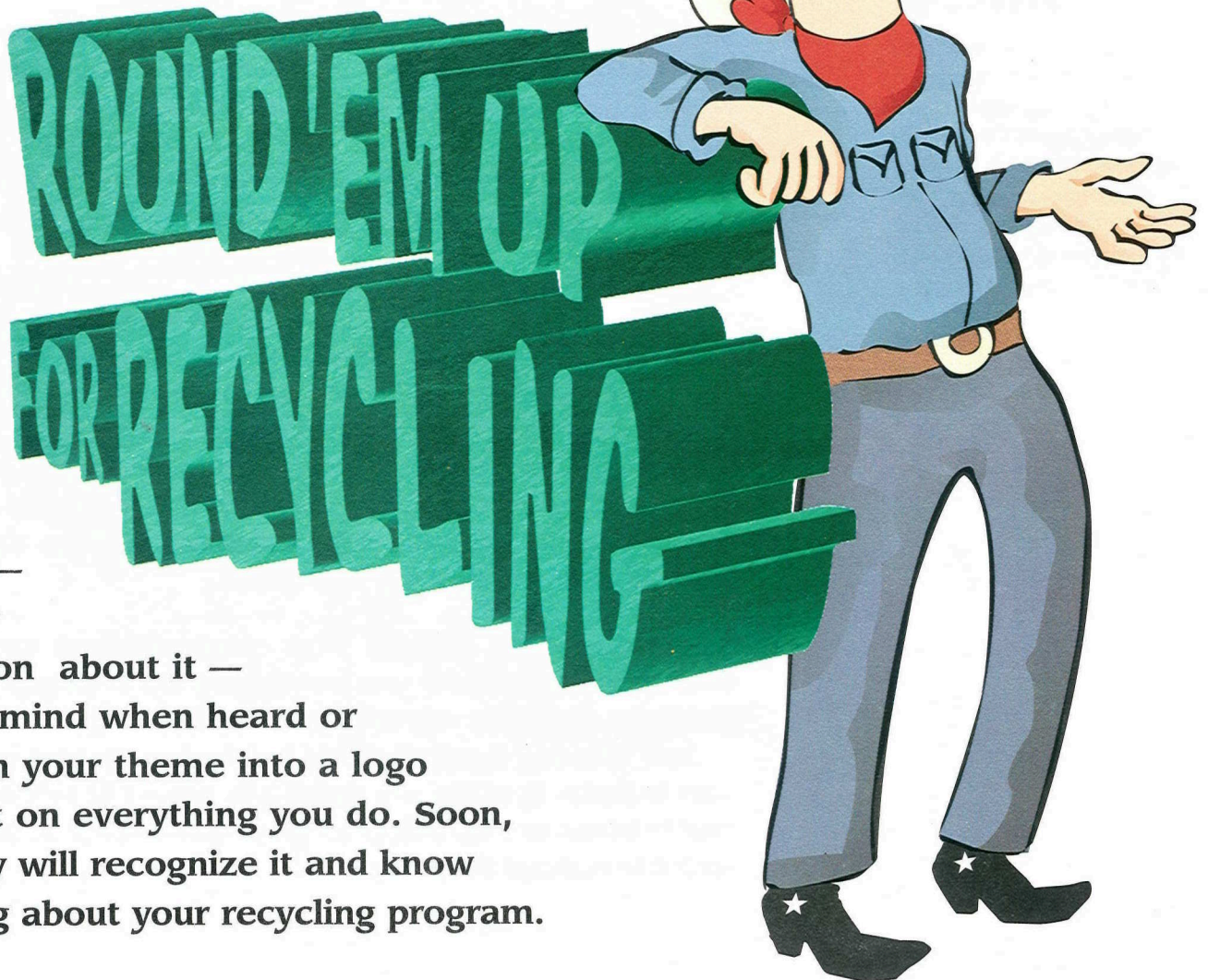
Your spending decisions should be based on the level of impact you want to make. Spending will typically be heavier at kick off when you need to inform and sell people on the program. Fewer ad dollars will be needed to maintain the program.

## Designing the Message

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**M**ost promotional campaigns have themes. A theme works like a product slogan — it positions your program in the minds of the public. A successful theme should make thoughts of your recycling program — and other information about it — spring to mind when heard or read. Turn your theme into a logo and use it on everything you do. Soon, everybody will recognize it and know something about your recycling program.

WE NEEDED A THEME  
THAT WOULD APPEAL TO  
TEXANS AND THAT WOULD  
GO WELL WITH  
OUR  
SPECIAL  
EVENTS.



The best themes are short — nine words or less. They are also persuasive in nature. (Remember, you are asking people to change their disposal habits.)

Good themes also have an emotional appeal. People often need more than a rational reason — i.e., “Our Landfills Are Full” — to change their behavior. They’re more likely to change because of peer pressure — “Join Your Neighbors and Recycle.” Or be pulled by a call to arms — “Rally ‘Round Recycling!”

The purpose of your theme is, first, to attract attention. Second, it should create interest so that people want to know more. Third, it should persuade through an emotional appeal.

**Rise Above the Clutter.** When you embark on a promotional campaign, you don’t go alone. Hundreds of products and services share the newspaper pages and airwaves with you. So how do you rise above this communications clutter?

One of the best ways is to keep your message as short as possible and to the point. Radio and television advertisements force you to do this. You can only say so much in 30 seconds, so you get to the main point quickly and don’t beat around the bush with details.

As a rule of thumb, assume your reader will spend about the same amount of time on your printed materials. People receive too much mail and other reading materials. They tend to graze through them, reading headlines for something interesting.

If your theme or headline pulls them in, keep the rest of your ad or brochure (called “body copy”) short and to the point. Otherwise you risk losing them. Photos, cartoons or other artwork can help illustrate your points and maintain reader interest. And don’t forget to put captions under photos — people read captions next after headlines.

**Consistency Counts.** Advertisers know that people have short memories. And they know the best way to get a message across is by repeating it. They not only repeat the same ad (often to our annoyance), but they repeat the same message, using the same look in everything they do. Magazine ads feature the same actor as seen in television and radio ads. Outdoor boards do the same. The objective: consistency.

Consistency does work. It helps you rise above the clutter by increasing your level of recognition. And it makes your job easier, because you don’t have to think up new messages each time you want to communicate.

**A Word About Specialty Items.** Pens, pencils, litter bags, felt tip markers, paperweights ... the list of advertising specialty items goes on and on. While these items can be crowd pleasers, we urge caution in allocating too much of your budget to them.

#### Tips for Creating a Winning Theme

- Limit the number of words to nine or less.
- Localize it to your city or state, if possible.
- Be persuasive — use wording that asks people to recycle.
- Use a positive tone rather than a dry, rational tone.
- Make the recycling program sound like a fun, exciting, or “in” thing to do.
- Create a theme that fits any communications needed — advertisements, special events, news reports, etc.

## Getting the Word Out

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**T**iming is everything. This old adage definitely applies to the launch of your promotional campaign. Advertising, special events, publicity — each should complement the other in a way that builds awareness as you proceed. Decide what you want to say and how you want to say it first. Once you have a theme, you can develop logos, printed materials and ideas for advertisements. You will then have a “promotional package” to sell.

WHEN WE LAUNCHED THE CAMPAIGN, WE SAW HOW OUR ADVANCE PLANNING PAID OFF. EVERYTHING FELL INTO PLACE.



- Collect all materials and review for consistency. Include all news stories, too, even coverage not initiated by you.
- List all your accomplishments and the reasons for successes and failures.
- Compare actual costs to budgeted figures.
- List the number of ads run, brochures printed, flyers sent, workshops and special events held, etc.
- Record the responses to various components of the campaign; i.e., service problems, media inquiries, citizen phone calls, brochures requested, etc.
- Conduct a public survey or focus group discussion to solicit input from the community.
- Solicit opinions and feedback from citizens at community meetings or events.
- Include recommendations for the future.
- Give credit for ideas and work contributed by organizations, businesses and individuals.

**Community Relations Usually Need an Advance Start.** Most community relations activities take extra time to set up and implement. For this reason, you may want to start them well in advance of your advertising and publicity efforts. This can be especially true with school contests and volunteer workshops.

**Line Up Advertising and Public Relations Next.** Start contacting media sales representatives at least eight weeks before your start-up date. The sooner the better. Many reps may want to involve their station's or newspaper's promotional staff, and this will require extra meetings and more time.

If you want to hold a kick-off event or facility tour, begin your planning while you're working with media representatives. They may provide ideas and extra support.

**Media Relations Come Last.** There are a variety of ways to interest the press in covering your story. Press conferences and special events are commonly used tactics. But a personal meeting with key editors and reporters is one of the best ways to gain coverage. You can start by sending them a letter and requesting a meeting. Follow-up a few days later with a telephone call to make an appointment.

Your recycling program may have gotten some coverage during its approval stage. If so, contact reporters who covered the story. They will be more familiar with the background issues and more likely to be interested in providing further coverage.

Always supply reporters with fact sheets. Include information about solid waste disposal in your area — number of tons disposed per day; expected life of the landfill and so on.

Provide facts on the benefits of recycling — waste reduction, energy and material conservation, etc. Back up your facts with numbers and statistics whenever possible.

Provide photos or tell reporters how they can obtain photos or film footage if they want to shoot their own. And provide the name and telephone number of your program's official spokesperson, so they know whom to call for more information.

Don't plan too many events too close together if you want to invite the press. You may confuse reporters by having too much going on, plus they tire of stories easily. Pick one event you want covered most and push it with media alerts or invitations. If you must have two or more "media worthy" events, try spacing them apart by several weeks.

Clever invitations can increase press attendance at your events. Try delivering recycling bins containing press kits, if your budget allows. However you decide to get the invitations to them, give no more than a week advance notice. Most reporters work on short time lines. If your invitation arrives too far in advance, it may get lost in the shuffle.

The day before your event, fax media alert reminders and call to make sure the reporter or media outlet received them. Ask the reporter if he or she plans to be there. This is a subtle way to apply pressure. Keep your tone of voice enthusiastic and encourage them to be there. If they commit to show up, thank them for their interest in your recycling program.

Samples of a press release and media alert are included at the end of this section.

**Involve Your Operations People.** As you plan and execute your promotion, make sure to include the operations people. Solicit their input and ideas. This will assure better cooperation when you need their help. You definitely do not want to volunteer things like truck rides, equipment demonstrations, or facility tours without seeking their permission first.

Work with them to prepare a game plan for possible glitches in service. Many recycling programs experience problems initially. People often recycle greater volumes at the beginning of a program, because they “save up” in anticipation. The greater the participation, the longer it takes to collect or process the materials.

This extra time can cause missed collections for curbside programs or slowdowns and a messy appearance for drop-off centers. Complaints and bad press can follow.

If you do experience problems, get the facts and reasons from your operations people first. Then provide the information to the press. Take a proactive approach. This way, you maintain better control over the information and minimize the risk for bad press.

**Vendors and Material Buyers Can Help.** If you contracted a waste hauling company to service your recycling program, ask them for promotional help. Many of these companies have developed extensive materials to educate citizens about recycling and how to participate. The same may be true with companies that plan to buy the recycled materials your program collects. Using their resources can save you money and time!

**Plan for Ongoing Communications.** New people move into the community. New material types are added to the program. New recycling centers and new collection routes open. Your program will need some amount of ongoing communications.

Keep a supply of how-to brochures or flyers on hand to fulfill requests from new residents or new areas of the community as the program expands.

Issue press releases periodically to provide an update on the program’s progress. A “progress release” should definitely go out after the first week of the program, to give people an initial pat on the back for their participation. Provide the volume recycled, the amount of landfill space saved and other positive feedback.

Changes in the program — such as adding new neighborhoods or new materials collected — provide good opportunities to “sell” the program again. You may also want to issue a “reminder release” periodically to re-explain which types of materials are acceptable and how they should be prepared for recycling.



## Press Release

### Tips on Preparing a Press Release

- Use your city letterhead or specially-designed letterhead with your program's logo or theme.
- Place the current date at the top of the release.
- Provide a time or date for the release. The most common wording is "For Immediate Release."
- List a contact person(s) and telephone number at the top of the release, so the reader will find it easily if he/she wants more information.
- Type your headline using bold letters or underlined letters. Try to use action verbs and keep the wording short.
- Provide the city where the release originates (usually your own city) for the dateline and type it in all-capital letters.
- Double-space the body copy. Insert the word "more" at the bottom of each page if the release continues to another page.
- Place the word "end" or use pound symbols (#####) to let the reader know he/she has reached the end of the release.

### ROUND'EM UP FOR RECYCLING

Clean Town, Texas  
January 1, 19xx

For Immediate Release  
Contact: Tex Trashnot  
Phone: 999-9999

#### CITY RECYCLING PROGRAM BEGINS FEBRUARY 1

CLEAN TOWN – The Department of Public Works announced today it would begin providing curbside recycling services on February 1 to all of the city's 35,000 homes. The recycling program will collect materials set out in special recycling bins along with the regular garbage each week. The program is projected to add five years to the life of the city's landfill within its first year of operation.

Recycling trucks will collect aluminum cans, glass containers, plastic milk and water bottles, and newspapers and magazines. Two-man crews will collect and sort the materials into separate compartments on each truck. A single 14-gallon plastic recycling bin will be delivered to each home during the week of January 21.

"The program start-up marks the end of a long planning phase that involved citizens, public works employees and city officials," said Tex Trashnot, spokesperson for the Clean Town Public Works Department. Trashnot said his department anticipates more than 75 percent of the homes covered by the program will participate on a regular basis.

Once collected, the recyclables will be transported to the city's new 35,000 square foot processing center where they will be further sorted and prepared for transport to manufacturers. Trashnot said the city expects to process 10,000 tons of recyclables in the center's first year of operation.

#####

Clean Town ■ Solid Waste Department ■ One Green St. ■ R-E-C-Y-C-L-E 732-9253

## Media Alert

### ROUND'EM UP FOR RECYCLING

**WHAT:** Recycling Tour  
**WHERE:** Clean Town Recycling Center, 100 Greenway Lane  
**WHEN:** 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, January 13  
**WHY:** Showcase how the city recycling program will operate

Plan to join Mayor Rex Recycling and other city officials for a ribbon-cutting ceremony and complete tour of the city's new 35,000 square foot recycling facility. Public works officials will be on hand to demonstrate the equipment and explain how the facility will process an estimated 10,000 tons of recyclables per year.

Clean Town ■ Solid Waste Department ■ One Green St. ■ R-E-C-Y-C-L-E 732-9253

#### Tips on Preparing a Media Alert

Arrange your information as shown to the right, using cue words like WHAT, WHERE, and WHEN to get your message across quickly. You may want to add a short paragraph at the bottom to provide additional information to entice the reporter to attend your event or to call for more information.

The best way to utilize a media alert is by fax. You should also transmit a cover sheet or fax post-it note indicating who should receive it as well as your fax number. Multiple copies of a fax to the same media outlet could get your message categorized as "junk fax." One good copy is sufficient, but call to make sure your fax was received and is legible. Follow up by calling three to four days after a mailing or the next day after faxing. Your media alert must arrive at least 24 hours in advance of an event.

CLEAN TOWN  
**RECYCLING CENTER**  
GRAND OPENING



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*The horse cartoon characters are used in this  
book with the permission of Gary Prickett.*



This publication is  
brought to you by the  
Regional Recycling  
Resource Center, a  
program of the  
Houston-Galveston

Area Council and Clean Houston.

The publication was partially funded  
through a grant by the State Energy  
Conservation Office.



Printed on recycled paper.