Fire Service
External Communications
Public Relations & Social Media

Presented by Laura Ward | WardComm Public Relations, LLC
Summit: Solutions to the Burning Issues in the Connecticut Fire Service | April 1 & 2, 2016
Think of PR & Social Media as a Toolkit
FIRE SERVICE EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Public Relations & Social Media

PR & Social Media Tools

- **Media**
  - Broadcast
  - Print
  - Online
  - Community

- **PR Writing**
  - Press Releases
  - Calendar Listings
  - Media Alerts

- **Website**
  - Design
  - Soup to Nuts

- **Social Media**
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - Instagram

- **Editorial Calendar**
  - How to Create
  - How to Use
FIRE SERVICE EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Media

• Media List Development
  • Broadcast – Television and Radio
  • Online – e.g., Patch, HamletHub, Courant.com
  • Print – Daily, monthly, weekly newspapers/magazines
  • Community – Town/City newsletters, local access television

• Media Relationships
  • Make sure the media knows who to contact
  • Be responsive to requests
  • Offer fire house tours

• Spokespeople
  • Identify approved spokespeople, in general and per incident
PR Writing

• **Press Releases**
  • Monthly Theme – 4-6 weeks in advance
  • Post-Incident Recap – as soon as possible
  • Personnel Announcement – as needed

• **Calendar Listings**
  • Event Announcement
  • 6 weeks in advance

• **Media Alerts**
  • Invite media to cover an event, program, etc.
  • 4 weeks in advance for print
  • 2 weeks in advance for broadcast
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KILLINGWORTH VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY REMINDS RESIDENTS TO “CHANGE YOUR CLOCK, CHANGE YOUR BATTERY”

February 29, 2016 | Killingworth, CT – It’s time to “spring ahead” and gain an hour of light in the evening. The Killingworth Volunteer Fire Company (KVFC) reminds residents that Daylight Saving Time begins at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 13, 2016. When setting clocks ahead one hour before going to bed on Saturday, March 12, remember to also change smoke alarm and carbon monoxide (CO) detector batteries.

“It’s a habit that’s both simple and life-saving,” says KVFC volunteer company Captain Arnie Moore. “Yet, so many people ignore their smoke and CO detectors. We urge everyone to not only change their batteries when they change their clocks, but also set a reminder to test their alarms once every month.”

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), roughly two-thirds of home fire deaths occur in homes with no smoke alarms. And, in homes with working alarms that simply fail to operate, it is usually because of batteries that are missing, disconnected, or dead. The KVFC shares the following NFPA guidelines:

- Replace smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button.
- Have everyone in the home understand the sound of the smoke alarm and know how to respond.
- Replace smoke alarms when they are 10 years old.
- Replace the smoke alarm immediately if it does not respond properly when tested.
- Smoke alarms with nonreplaceable (long-life) batteries are designed to remain effective for up to 10 years. If the alarm chirps a warning that the battery is low, replace the entire smoke alarm right away.
- For smoke alarms with any other type of battery, replace batteries at least once a year. If the alarm chirps, replace only the battery.

Volunteers Needed

The Killingworth Volunteer Fire Company is currently participating in Everyday Hero CT, a program dedicated to increasing the number of volunteer firefighters throughout the state. Eighty percent of all fire personnel in Connecticut are volunteers, and the majority of fire departments throughout the state are experiencing a volunteer shortage. Local fire departments need volunteers of all skill levels and abilities, people willing and able to respond to emergencies whenever called upon.

“The skills and experience gained as a volunteer firefighter are invaluable and have a positive and lasting impact on the lives of others,” says Chief Fred Druke, Everyday Hero CT program manager. “Those who join their local fire departments sign up for one of the most rewarding opportunities they’ll ever have.”

About the Killingworth Volunteer Fire Company

Incorporated in 1947, the Killingworth Volunteer Fire Company (KVFC) proudly protects 6,500 people living in a 36 square mile area. Dedicated to serving and protecting the lives and property of those who live in Killingworth by providing fire, rescue and first responder medical care, the KVFC operates out of two fire stations – Station 1 located at 333 Route 81 and Station 2 located at 15 Little City Road. The company operates eight pieces of apparatus – three engines (851, 853, 855), two tankers (862, 861), a heavy rescue (89), two light rescue/brush trucks (885, 887) – and has an antique tank (681). Anyone interested in learning more about the KVFC should call 860-663-1785, visit killingworthfire.org, or connect on Facebook at Killingworth Volunteer Fire Co. Drills are held on Monday nights.

About Everyday Hero CT

A partnership of the Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association (CFCA) and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), the Everyday Hero CT campaign is a two-year Volunteer Workforce Solutions (VWS) initiative designed to address the shortage of volunteer firefighters in Connecticut. It is helping achieve a viable and sustainable volunteer fire service for 15 Connecticut fire departments: Broad Brook Volunteer Fire Department, Cromwell Fire and EMS Department, Gales Ferry Volunteer Fire Company, Gardiner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. (Gales), Greenwich Fire Department, Killingworth Volunteer Fire Department, Middletown Volunteer Fire Company, Old Mystic Fire Department, Rocky Hill Fire Department, Somers Fire Department, Stafford Volunteer Firefighters Association, Trumbull Volunteer Fire Service, Westfield Fire Department (Middletown), Windsor Volunteer Fire Department, Wolcott Fire Department. Everyday Hero CT is funded by a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant awarded to the CFCA by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to develop a model to enhance the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. For more information, visit www.everydayheroCT.org.
Sample Press Release Results

Killingworth Volunteer Fire Company Reminds Residents to "Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery"

Daylight Savings Time ("Spring Ahead") Begins at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 13, 2016

By LAURA WARD (Open Post) - © March 2, 2016 9:13 pm ET

It's time to "spring ahead" and gain an hour of light in the evening. The Killingworth Volunteer Fire Company (KVFC) reminds residents that Daylight Savings Time begins at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 13, 2016. When setting clocks ahead one hour before going to bed on Saturday, March 12, 2016, don't forget to replace the batteries in smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors.

Firefighter Scott Kotowski started out as a junior recruit in 2004, progressing to volunteer firefighter with Middletown's Woodfield Fire, where he was eventually hired. Kotowski continues work as a volunteer, he said. "I joined to give back to the community," he said. "It's a way of giving back to the people who helped raise me."
The Avon Volunteer Fire Department

INCORPORATED
25 Darling Drive
AVON, CONNECTICUT 06001

CALENDAR LISTING

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AVON VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT PLANS 7TH ANNUAL BLOOD DRIVE

For members of the Avon Volunteer Fire Department (AVFD), saving lives comes with the territory and opportunities to help people arise every day. Luckily, there aren’t the only people who can save lives — by donating a pint of blood to the American Red Cross, anyone can help.

On Friday, March 25, 2016, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., the AVFD will hold a blood drive at its Company 1 fire station located at 25 Darling Drive.

Make an appointment online at [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) or by calling 1-800-RED CROSS (733-2767). For more information about the AVFD, visit [avonvfd.org](http://avonvfd.org) or join the Department on Facebook at AvonVFD.

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**check it out**

Valley American Muslim Center, 35 Harris Road, Tuesday, March 22, 10-10:30 a.m., bring bag or box for food

Avon Newcomers meeting Tuesday, March 22, 7:30 p.m., topic: Entertaining Made Easy presented by Avon Prime Meats and Bottle, RSVP to Camilla Shepherd at southernyahoocom.com

Board of Finance meeting Tuesday, March 22, 7:30 p.m., board will consider budget Thursday, level of Community Center, needed

Be a hero and donate blood during Red Cross Month Friday, March 25, 11 a.m.-4:45 p.m., at the Avon Volunteer Fire Department, Company 1, 25 Darling Drive, to make anpt. visit redcrossblood.org or call 1-800-733-2767
Sample Media Alert and Placement

The Avon Volunteer Fire Department
INCORPORATED
25 Darling Drive
AVON, CONNECTICUT 06001

MEDIA ALERT

AVON CITIZEN’S FIRE ACADEMY STAGES MOCK AUTOMOBILE RESCUE
Students Will Participate in Drill To Manage Motor Vehicle Crash Scene and Extricate and Prepare Victim for Transport Via Life Star

WHO: The Avon Volunteer Fire Department (AVFD) and other local emergency service providers – Life Star, Police, and paramedics – will stage a mock automobile rescue.

WHAT: The drill is the culmination of an eight-week Citizen’s Fire Academy program. Students will dress in firefighter gear and use tools to extricate a victim from a car, including breaking the car’s windows and cutting off the roof. Seven Avon residents are enrolled in the class, being offered for the fifth time since 2005.

WHERE: Avon Public Works Garage
11 Arch Road, Avon

WHEN: Saturday, May 22nd
9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m. (with LifeStar landing around 9:30 a.m.)

INTERVIEW/POTO OPPORTUNITIES:
• See trainees use the tools of LifeStar to rescue a crash victim, while law enforcement manages other aspects of the mock crash scene.
• Watch a Citizen’s Fire Academy students remove the victim from the car and prepare the victim to transport via Life Star helicopter.
• Speak with Citizen’s Fire Academy students about their experience in the class.
• Interview Citizen’s Fire Academy instructor Dennis Bianchi about the program’s mission.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5jm5JCJwok

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Website

• Design
  • Does not need to be fancy or expensive
  • Simple and easy platforms include WordPress, Drupal, Joomla

• Soup to Nuts
  • Basic Information
    • History
    • Updates (News)
    • Don’t forget fire house locations
  • Social Media Links
  • Volunteer Application
  • Apparatus Photos
  • Online Donation
Social Media – Facebook

- **Image Sizes**
  - Profile Photo – at least 180x180 pixels
  - Cover Photo – at least 399 pixels wide and 150 pixels tall

- **When to Post**
  - Use “Insights”
  - Schedule
FIRE SERVICE EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Public Relations & Social Media

Social Media – Facebook

• What to Post
  • Incident Information/Photos
  • Weather Alerts
  • Weekly Call Logs
  • LODD Remembrances
  • Safety Tips
  • School Visits (with permission)
  • Personnel Announcements
  • New Apparatus/New Fire House
  • #TBT

• How to Grow Likes
  • Facebook address on website, apparatus, collateral materials
  • Boost Page/Posts
Social Media – Twitter

• Why Twitter?

  What is your Department’s role on Twitter
  • Emergency Management/Emergency Notification
  • Education
  • Both

• Image Sizes
  • Profile Photo – 400x400 pixels
  • Header Photo – 1500 pixels wide and 500 pixels tall

• Character Count
  • Tweets are limited to 140 characters
Social Media – Instagram

- Why Instagram?
  - Real time visual incident reporting
    - Pros
    - Cons
  - Latergramming
- To Filter or Not to Filter ...
  - Incidents
  - Other Photos
Social Media – Hashtags

• What are Hashtags?
  • Merriam-Webster: a word or phrase preceded by the symbol # that classifies or categorizes the accompanying text (such as a tweet)

• Should Hashtags be part of your Social Media Strategy?
  • Depends who you ask
  • Facebook: 1-2 per post
  • Twitter 3-4 per tweet
  • Instagram: 6-10 per post
Social Media Scheduling Tools

• **Facebook**
  • Facebook Post Scheduler
  • HootSuite

• **Instagram**
  • HootSuite

• **Twitter**
  • Hootsuite
Social Media Analytics

- **Facebook**
  - Facebook Insights – reach, likes, comments, shares
- **Twitter**
  - Twitter Analytics – impressions, profile visits, mentions
- **Instagram**
  - Iconosquare – key metrics
FIRE SERVICE EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Public Relations & Social Media

Social Media Administration
• Who are admins?
• How many admins should there be?

Negativity on Social Media
• Be proactive
  • Facebook Page settings
• To Block or Not to Block
• “Self-Policing”
Editorial Calendars

• Plan and execute a communications program
  • Monthly
  • Weekly
  • Daily

• Ties all other tools together
  • Identifies when each tool will be used and how

• Creates a roadmap/blueprint
  • Establishes focus and provides direction
Questions & Answers

Laura Ward

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