



There are several options for the actual development work needed to establish your department web site, including utilizing active members, hiring an outside professional or reaching out to your community for assistance. Consider meeting with local web developers, information system technology departments of local businesses and local high schools, technical schools and colleges to seek out assistance in your web site development.

## Social Media

Social media is the newest medium available for your department to market a smoke detector installation program or any other public education program available to your community. There are many popular social media sites available, but this publication does not endorse any particular one. We will speak, however, about one of the most popular sites that many nationally recognized fire service organizations use: Facebook. Facebook allows your organization to develop a Page, with no development costs to the department. Your Page can be viewed by anyone, allowing you to share fire safety messages with a wide audience.

Another popular emerging market is the capability of "Tweeting" your customers via Twitter. Twitter is especially helpful for sending your media representatives real-time notifications of emergency incidents, incident updates and traffic information due to emergency incidents. Additionally, public fire safety information and notifications about department events can be sent to anyone who is following your designated department Twitter account.

Like any other department initiatives, programs such as web sites, Facebook Pages and Twitter accounts are only effective if they are constantly managed by a designated individual or team of members. Department leadership always needs to keep this in mind as these programs are being developed to ensure information is both accurate and timely, giving credibility to your organization and providing a wonderful service to your community.

## Inclusion of the Media in Your Community Fire Safety Coalition

Your department must make it a priority to reach out to all of your local media representatives and include them in the membership of your Community Fire Safety Coalition. Spending time with these individuals away from the incident scene is critical to creating a working relationship that is not based on an emergency or a deadline.

You must make an effort to ensure you are inclusive to the entire media market, and not exclusive to any one particular network, station or printed publication. Having a cross-segment of your entire media market represented in this community effort will help ensure your department will be well represented to your community and your media is guaranteed to receive a consistent message from your department. If you are fortunate enough to have an extremely large and engaged media market in your community, you have the option to spin the media component off into a sub-committee of your primary coalition; just make sure you continue to have media representation and input in your primary coalition.

## Notifying the Media of Emergency Incidents

Your department should work with local media to create a notification process when emergency incidents occur in your community. This process should reach all media outlets, and your notifications should be done in a consistent manner. One of the most effective ways to start this critical process is to contact media members in your Community Fire Safety Coalition and ask, "What is the easiest way to notify you when we are working an emergency incident?"

Today's technology is a double-edged sword, as many of the new radio systems used by fire departments do not allow the media to track incident activity in real-time. On the other hand, there are many new technologies your department can utilize to quickly notify the entire media market of emergency incidents, including text messages, Tweets, Facebook posts and emails.