

# Introduction: Pedestrian Safety Media Kit

Another pedestrian injury or death occurs on a San Francisco street, possibly in your neighborhood. As someone active in your community, you are asked by a local reporter to comment on the event. Beyond the tragedy this story represents, you would like to attribute the incident to the larger issue of pedestrian safety and concerns about the walkability of many of our streets.

But where do you begin? How can you enlarge the story from one of personal tragedy to encompass the health and safety of the community as a whole? How can you guide the discourse away from “blaming the victim” to one of shared responsibility and social accountability?

Community advocates can play a powerful role in shaping and guiding the making of the news so that the public begins to see pedestrian safety in a more comprehensive and productive way. Many of these tragedies are **preventable** with proper planning, education, enforcement, and engineering. Building this awareness -- and rallying people to make their voices heard -- can have a powerful influence on policy makers.

The news has a strong impact on people’s perceptions of the world. The media can provide visibility, legitimacy, and credibility to an issue. The news media can communicate to opinion leaders and influential people, as well as the general public. It frames issues by suggesting what people should think about, how they should think about the subjects, and who has worthwhile things to say. When community residents respond to a pedestrian injury or death through the media, they have a unique opportunity to focus the debate on possible solutions to pedestrian safety issues.

The media are often reactive and event driven. Pedestrian safety may be the subject of a series or a response to a report or policy statement. But most often, pedestrian safety makes the news because of a tragic injury or death. This kit will enable you to shape powerful messages in the media. By raising awareness, garnering community support, and mobilizing community action through the media, you can influence local decision makers to enact or change policies and improve pedestrian and traffic safety in your community.

Next time a tragedy occurs --or before it even happens -- you will be equipped with the tools you’ll need to frame the issue of pedestrian and traffic safety to one of shared responsibility and social accountability.