Wichita Falls Area
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

Enhancing Volunteer Fire Department Marketing Efforts

VFD Marketing Toolkit

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KEY MARKETING TECHNIQUES

Marketing is crucial for Volunteer Fire Departments to get the word out about the work they do and how the community can support.

Key marketing techniques for boosting your VFD's visibility:

- Know your Audience
- Social Media Outreach
- Promotional Material
- Strong Media Connections
- Community Engagement

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Before you begin marketing your VFD, you need to know who your primary audience is - age, occupation, location, etc. This will help you to know what type of content to use, what events may draw them near, what statistics to share, and which businesses to approach.

Tips for engaging your audience:

- Tailor your messages
- Use diverse means of communication - email, mail, social media, etc.
- Address donors by their names and acknowledge past contributions
- Recognize donors/supporters
- Peer to peer fundraising
- Host community events that appeal to your audience

SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

Social media is a great, free tool for engaging your audience and boosting your community's awareness of your VFD.

Tips to get the most from social media:

- Schedule posts in advance
- Post as often as possible, if not daily
- Develop a range of content - safety tips, VFD facts, local statistics, department member spotlights, testimonials, etc.
- Don't be afraid to re-purpose old content
- Use real pictures and video when possible
- Designate someone to take photos and/or video

PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

Brand recognition is essential for your VFD's awareness in the community. Do you have a crest, logo, or tagline that is unique to your department? Make sure your community will recognize it when they see it. When distributing material, all information is correct and accounted for.

Tips for creating promotional material:

- Incorporate your VFD's logo, tagline, etc.
- Use a consistent color palette
- Use readable fonts
- Partner with local schools to help create flyers, mailers, t-shirt design, etc.
- Have multiple proof readers

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Foster community connections through community events and local partnerships to boost visibility, strengthen relationships, and encourage local involvement.

Tips for community engagement:

- Build relationships with local businesses and ask about promoting your VFD at local businesses (marquees, digital billboards, in bulletins or programs)
- Provide a list of needs, particularly in heavy fire seasons and partner with grocery stores so residents can purchase while shopping and leave in the donate box to be picked up by department members
- Consider events that your community will benefit from, such as a workshop or an open house to see your department
- Partner with local churches - churches or classes within the church could "adopt" a need of the VFD (water, detergent etc.) Donation information could be added to the church bulletin.

STRONG MEDIA CONNECTIONS

The media (newspapers, tv stations, and radio) can be instrumental in promoting your VFD.

Tips for utilizing the media:

- Use press releases to provide updates regarding events, needs, etc.
- Schedule appearances for live interviews to promote events & needs
- Keep updated statistics regularly available:
- # of calls per month, last year, etc.
- Average costs to the department
- Insurance rates for homes without fire protection

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BRAINSTORMING IDEAS

Social media

1. Schedule regular posts on your VFD, town and/or county community page. Even if you don't have emergency or fundraising information to share, develop and schedule posts in advance with safety tips, volunteer fire fighting facts, local statistics, or even department member profiles.
2. Partner with the local high school English or Journalism teachers at the beginning of the year to have students write press releases, fire fighter profiles, design flyers, or perhaps even do a series of videos for Facebook. It's a great "real world" assignment and teaches students the importance of community.
3. Designate someone to take photos and/or video. It only takes a few seconds, but a picture really is worth 1000 words. Often when you're responding to emergencies, those you protect are sleeping or working and may not know about the call until well after the incident is over. Those pictures and video tell important stories that deserve to be told and help people SEE the value of your service.

Media

1. Utilize press release templates included in this packet, or come up with your own, to update local newspapers, radio and TV stations on upcoming events, needs, significant changes/upgrades within the department, or even volunteer profiles.
2. If your department is near a TV station, schedule appearances on the morning and noon shows to promote events.
3. Keep your statistics fresh and use that information to remind people of the value of VFDs. Examples might include:
    a. Total number of calls for the month
    b. Number of first responder calls last year
    c. Average cost to the department for a first responder call, a structure fire, grass fire, etc.
    d. Average insurance rates for residents without fire protection
    e. Provide average costs of necessary items: tires, hoses, bunker gear, helmets, boots, gloves, etc.
4. Keep a needs list and celebrate with the community when a need is met. They won't know unless you tell them. This applies in all categories included in this list of ideas.

In community

1. Ask local banks or businesses with marquees or digital billboards to schedule messages of support for your local VFD. Some gas pumps also have messaging opportunities on the payment screens.

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2. Partner with local restaurants to designate a date for a VFD promotion. Suggestions might be a day or week to "round-up" your bill with the additional amount going to the VFD. Or perhaps restaurants could promote a $1.00 from every daily special ordered during a specific week will be donated to the VFD. If your town has multiple restaurants, try to schedule one or two a quarter. Also provide tent cards for the restaurant tables to promote the event and share facts about your VFD. Cross promote through Facebook.
3. When planning, remember the 3-Ts—time, talent, and treasure. Not everyone can hop on a grass truck and fight fires. However, look for people in the community with specific skill sets needed and who have extra time. Cultivate welders and mechanics to assist with small projects to help keep the trucks running. Identify those with administrative skills to handle donor correspondence and minutes. Retired bank employees might make great treasurers. Former nonprofit leaders could be great grant writers or reviewers. And utilize the group of individuals who enjoy planning a party to organize and manage fundraising events.
4. Provide a list of needs, particularly in heavy fire seasons and partner with the local Dollar General or market so residents can purchase while shopping and leave in the donate box, to be picked up by department members. i.e. bottled water, protein bars, Gatorade, and other shelf stable items. Cumulative small donations can have significant impact on your department budget.
5. Provide a simple announcement for inclusion in church bulletins, water bills, bank statements and electric co-ops. (if allowed)
6. Contact local convenience and grocery stores for permission to provide flyers for inclusion in customer bags,
7. Distribute flyers for community bulletin boards at libraries, senior citizens centers, post offices, and other public gathering places.
8. Work with insurance agents in your area to determine how much the VFD presence impacts insurance rates and utilize that information to strengthen your department's case for support.
9. "Adopt-a-firefighter" campaigns to replace needed items like gloves, boots, etc.

Targeted Fundraising

1. KNOW YOUR DONORS! When contacting existing donors, include information that mentions their previous donations (when, why, or how much). This lets donors know the department is paying attention and really appreciates that individual's support. "Thank you for your past support…." Is very generic.
2. PEOPLE GIVE TO PEOPLE WHO ASK FOR MONEY FOR WORTHY CAUSES. Identify your strongest community supporters and ask them to develop a list of five people they know and would commit to making an appeal on the department's behalf.

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REASONS TO SUPPORT MY VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Supporting volunteer fire departments through various means, ensures their sustainability and enables them to continue serving the community effectively. Their dedication and commitment to public safety make them an essential asset and worthy of community support.

1. **Rapid Emergency Response:** Volunteer fire departments provide rapid response to emergencies, including fires, accidents, medical emergencies, and natural disasters. Their presence in communities ensures help arrives quickly, minimizing the potential loss of life and property damage.

2. **Cost-Effectiveness:** VFDs offer cost-effective solutions for communities, especially in areas with limited resources. Compared to professional departments, with substantial budgets, volunteer departments rely on the commitment and dedication of community members who serve without financial compensation.

3. **Local Knowledge and Community Connection:** Volunteer firefighters are often residents of the community they serve. This knowledge and connection enable them to understand specific needs, infrastructure, and challenges of the area. Their familiarity with the community contributes to more effective emergency response.

4. **Flexibility and Availability:** Volunteer firefighters often have the flexibility to respond to emergencies at any time. Their availability ensures that emergency services are accessible 24/7, contributing to the overall safety and well-being of the community.

5. **Community Engagement and Empowerment:** Volunteer departments provide opportunities for residents to actively contribute to the safety and security of their community by volunteering as firefighters, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), or in supporting roles. This involvement enhances community cohesion and civic pride.

6. **Training and Skill Development:** Departments invest in comprehensive training and skill development programs for their members. Firefighters receive training in firefighting techniques, emergency medical services, hazardous materials handling, and other essential skills. This training not only benefits the individuals involved but also enhances the overall emergency response capabilities within the community.

7. **Collaboration and Mutual Aid:** Volunteer departments often collaborate with neighboring departments through mutual aid agreements. In case of large-scale emergencies or when additional resources are required, these agreements allow departments to share personnel, equipment, and expertise. This collaboration strengthens emergency response capabilities and improves community resilience.

8. **Economic Impact:** Volunteer fire departments contribute to the economic well-being of communities. By providing emergency services, they help protect local businesses, homes, and infrastructure from fire and other disasters. This protection preserves property values, maintains a safe environment for commerce, supports local economic development, and often help reduce insurance costs for businesses and homeowners.

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INFORMATION TO USE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA AND FUNDRAISING

Did you know……

- Some 75% of the fire departments in Texas are managed entirely by volunteers, according to the Texas A&M Forest Service.

- Over _____% of all _____ VFD calls are for First Responder assistance.

- Could __city name_____ or __name_____county afford an all-paid fire department? Your *volunteer* fire department is worthy of your support? Please give.

- Fighting fires as a volunteer requires the same training career firefighters receive. It is a significant time investment. Our volunteer firefighters are intentionally making that investment in our community. Please invest in them by donating to the _____VFD.

- Volunteer firefighters *rely* on donations, fundraisers and grants so we can *rely* on them. Please give generously.

- Last month _____ VFD volunteers invested _____ hours in firefighting, first responder calls, training and fundraising. Please invest in them. We're all in this together.

Volunteer Firefighter Profile Sample

_____ is one of the dedicated fighters for the _____ Volunteer Fire Department. _____ has been part of the team protecting our community for _____ years. When he's not fighting fires, he can be found *add a line about his profession.* He also enjoys *add information about other hobbies, spending time with family, etc.* Thanks to _____ and the other volunteers at the _____ VFD, our community is safer. We appreciate you _____!

TUESDAY IS SPECIAL!
ORDER UP TO SUPPORT
THE
MY TOWN VFD

You can help keep our community safe!
Order the Tuesday Daily Special
and $1.00 will be donated to the
My Town Volunteer Fire Department.

Last year, the VFD made _____fire
and First Responder calls,
saving $1,000s in damage and
potentially saving lives.

Your giving is so important!
Thank you in advance.

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Thank you in advance.

SAMPLE EMAIL OR LETTER OF APPEAL

To: name123@email.com

From: name@email.com

(Subject)- _____Volunteer Fire Department Emergency Request

{Add date and inside address if sending as a letter.}

Dear _____,

I am writing today to ask for your help. Recently, our volunteer fire department has been on the front lines of a very active fire season. This has caused a strain on our equipment, our volunteer firefighters, and our resources.

To date in 202__, we have responded to _____ fires and _____ first responder calls. With the increases in fuel costs and other supplies, we are approaching a critical crossroads. The silver lining is we know we live in a generous community that understands the value of the volunteer services we provide.

Today I'm asking you to consider a tax-deductible donation to ensure our trucks keep rolling the next time there is an emergency need.

Donations can be sent to {insert preferred donation methods/addresses here}

If you have questions or need additional information, you can contact us at _____.

Yours sincerely,
{Add signature if a letter}

_____
Chief, _____ VFD

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

{Place on department letterhead}

Date Tax ID Number _____

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Dear _____,

Thank you for your donation of $_____ for *(general fire department needs or other specific items if directed.)* We are very grateful for your support and confidence in our department. This money will go right to work, helping us prepare for the next call.

As you know well, volunteer fire departments are the first and sometimes only line of defense in times of emergency. In Texas, over 70% of the state's fire protection is provided by volunteers. Our department averages _____ calls each year, including fire and first responder calls. That's why donors like you are so important to our work. Because of your help, we will be ready for the next emergency.

{Insert personal paragraph here if needed.}

Your donation to the _____ Volunteer Fire Department is tax deductible, and this letter of appreciation also serves as your receipt for the donation.

Gratefully,

_____

Chief, _____ Volunteer Fire Department

MEDIA CONTACTS

Wichita Falls Service Area Media List

As of 6/22/2023

State	County	Medium	Organization	Address	City	St	Zip	Phone	Fax	Contact	Email
TX	Archer	Newspaper	Archer County News	PO Box 1125	Archer City	TX	76351	940-574-4569	940-574-4234		archercountynews@gmail.com
TX	Baylor	Newspaper	Baylor County Banner (Seymour)	PO Box 912	Seymour	TX	76380	940-889-2616	940-889-3610		banner@srcaccess.net
TX	Baylor	Radio	KSEY	P.O. Box 471	Seymour	TX	76380	940-889-2637	940-889-2637		fmksey@aol.com
TX	Childress	Newspaper	Childress Index	PO Box 153540	Lufkin	TX	75915	940-937-2525	866-863-1118		whitney@thechildressnews.com
TX	Childress	Radio	KCTX	1111 16th St NW	Childress	TX	79201	940-937-6316	940-937-6551		kctxradio@gmail.com
TX	Clay	Newspaper	Clay County Leader	PO Drawer 10	Henrietta	TX	76365	940-538-4333	940-538-4542		editor@claycountyleader.com
TX	Foard	Newspaper	Foard County News	PO Box 489	Crowell	TX	79227	940-684-1355	940-684-1700		foardcountynews@gmail.com
TX	Hardeman	Newspaper	Quanah Tribune Chief	PO Box 481	Quanah	TX	79252	940-663-5333	940-663-5073		editor@quanahtribunechief.com
TX	Haskell	Newspaper	The Haskell Star	PO Box 1178	Stamford	TX	79553	940-864-2810	325-773-5105	Audra Arendall	audra@thestamfordstar.com
TX	Jack	Newspaper	Jacksboro Gazette News	PO Drawer 70	Jacksboro	TX	76458	940-567-2616	940-567-2071		editor@jacksboronewspapers.com
TX	Jack	Newspaper	Jack County Herald	PO Drawer 70	Jacksboro	TX	76458	940-567-2616	940-567-2071		editor@jacksboronewspapers.com
TX	Knox	Newspaper	The Knox County News	121 E B Street, Suite B	Munday	TX	76371	940-422-5350	866-863-1118		vcarter@hicks-co.com
TX	Montague	Newspaper	Bowie News	218 W. Tarrant	Bowie	TX	76230	940-872-2247	940-872-4812		editor@bowienewsonline.com
TX	Montague	Newspaper	Nocona News	P.O. Box 539	Nocona	TX	76255	940-825-3201	940-825-3202		news@noconanews.net
TX	Montague	Radio	KNTX	P.O. Box 1080	Bowie	TX	76230	940-872-2288	940-872-1228		onair@kntxradio.com
TX	Throckmorton	Newspaper	Throckmorton Tribune	P O Box 870	Stamford	TX	79553	325-773-5550			callie@clearfork.media
TX	Wichita	TV	KAUZ (Channel 6-CBS)	3601 Seymour Hwy	Wichita Falls	TX	76309	940-322-1146	940-322-5149	Richard Haddox	news@kauz.com
TX	Wichita	TV	KSWO (Channel 7- ABC)	1401 SE 60th St	Lawton	OK	73501	580-355-7000	580-355-3811		news@kswo.com
TX	Wichita	Radio	Town Square Media (Clear Channel) 102.3; 92.9; 106.3; AM1290	2525 Kell Blvd, Suite 200	Wichita Falls	TX	76308	940-763-1111	940-322-3166	Troy Clingerman	troy.clingerman@townsquaremedia.com
TX	Wichita	Radio	Cumulus Broadcasting 99.9; 94.9; 103.9; 104.7	4302 Callfield	Wichita Falls	TX	76308	940-691-2311	940-696-2255	Charlotte Holster	charlotte.holster@cumulus.com
TX	Wichita	Radio	BOB FM 100.9	719 Scott St, Suite 1009	Wichita Falls	76301		940-322-1009	940-767-3299	Colleen James	colleen@bobradio.fm
TX	Wichita	Radio	KMOC	PO Box 41	Wichita Falls	TX	76307	940-767-3303	940-723-5807		kmocfm@wf.net
TX	Wichita	Newspaper	Burkburnett Informer Star	417 N Avenue C	Burkburnett	TX	76354	940-569-2191	940-569-0704		jeff@burknews.com
TX	Wichita	Newspaper	Electra Star News	PO Box 1192	Electra	TX	76360	940-495-2149	940-495-2627		electrastarnews@electratel.net
TX	Wichita	Newspaper	Times Record News	PO Box 120	Wichita Falls	TX	76308	940-767-8341	940-767-1741	Claire Kowalick	ckowalick@gannett.com
TX	Wichita	TV	KFDX-KJTL (Channel 3-NBC)	4500 Seymour Hwy	Wichita Falls	TX	76309	940-692-6273	940-692-1441		news@kfdx.com
TX	Wichita	Newspaper	Sheppard Senator	82 TRW/PA 419 G Avenue	Wichita Falls	TX	76311	940-676-2732	940-676-4245		82TRWPA.1us.af.mil
TX	Wilbarger	Newspaper	Vernon Daily Record	P O Box 1677	Vernon	TX	76385	940-552-5454	940-553-4823		vdr@vernonrecord.com
TX	Wilbarger	Radio	KVWC	PO Box 1419	Vernon	TX	76385	940-552-6221	940-553-4222		kvwc@kvwc.com
TX	Young	Newspaper	Graham Leader	PO Box 600	Graham	TX	76450	940-549-7800	940-549-4364		editor@grahamleader.com
TX	Young	Newspaper	Olney Enterprise	PO Box 577	Olney	TX	76374	940-564-5558	940-432-3672		editor@olneyenterprise.com
TX	Young	Radio	KWSA	620 Oak St.	Graham	TX	76450	940-549-1330	940-549-8628		production947@yahoo.com
OK	Comanche	Radio	KCCU	2800 West Gore Blvd.	Lawton	OK	73505	888-454-7800			kccu@cameron.edu
OK	Comanche	Radio	KLAW	626 SW Avenue D	Lawton	OK	73501	580-581-3600	580-357-2880		kimdodds@townsquaremedia.com
OK	Comanche	Newspaper	Lawton Constitution	102 SW 3rd	Lawton	OK	73501	580-357-9545			dhale@lawton-constitution.com
OK	Cotton	Newspaper	Walters Herald	P.O. Box 247	Walters	OK	73572	580-875-3326	580-875-3150		cottoncountylegals@sbcglobal.net

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OK	Jackson	Newspaper	Altus Times	218 W Commerce St	Altus	OK	73521	580-482-1221			editor@altustimes.com
OK	Jefferson	Newspaper	Waurika News Journal & The Ryan Leader	117 E. Broadway Ave	Waurika	OK	73573	580-228-2545			waurikanewsjournal@gmail.com
OK	Stephens	Newspaper	Duncan Banner	P.O. Box 1268	Duncan	OK	73534	580-255-5354	580-255-8889		charlene.belew@duncanbanner.com
											tamara.gregor@duncanbanner.com
OK	Tillman	Newspaper	Frederick Press- Leader	218 W Commerce St	Altus	OK	73521	580-482-1221			editor@altustimes.com

OKLAHOMA RAILROAD COMMISSION WEBSITE

A step-by-step guide to locate operators of oil properties in your area.

You can search the Oklahoma Railroad Commission website to determine who the oil operators are in your area. This will help you create a list of potential donors to ask for their support while you protect their investments.

1. Go to www.oklahoma.gov

2. In the Search bar enter: GIS Map Viewer
   Zoom (scroll) into map to your county
   At the top of the page Go to: (select your county)
   Map tools (zoom to move to your area of county)
   Zoom again to space out the wells**.**
   Use Map tools at top of screen: Click on Identifier icon (circle with small inside)
   Select identify wells
   Go back to map and hover over or click on well
   Attributes box will open and will list Operator Name

3. Go back to Railroad Commission home page
   In Content Search bar at top of page enter:
   Operator contact information
   Select Oil and Gas Directory: Operator Contact Info
   Scroll down to Oil and Gas Directory Link
   Download Excel directory
   Look up name Oil and Gas Operators on this list

Next, add these names and addresses to your list and mail them an annual postcard/letter asking for donations.

Help them to know who you and why they should support your department:
"We are one of the VFDs that keep your oil properties safe in wildfires."

TEXAS RAILROAD COMMISSION WEBSITE

A step-by-step guide to locate operators of oil properties in your area.

You can search the Texas Railroad Commission Website to determine who the oil operators are in your area. This will help you create a list of potential donors to ask for their support while you protect their investments.

1. Go to www.rrc.state.tx.us

2. In the Search bar enter: GIS Map Viewer
   Select "Public GIS Viewer (Map)"
   Scroll down – click on "Launch Public GIS Viewer"
   At the top of the page Go to: (select your county)
   Map tools (zoom to move to your area of county)
   Zoom again to space out the wells**.**
   Use Map tools at top of screen: Click on Identifier icon (circle with small i inside)
   Select identify wells
   Go back to map and hover over or click on each well
   Attributes box will open and will list Operator Name
   There will be a lot of plugged wells, but the ones that are currently active will have the Operating Companies name on them.

3. Go back to Railroad Commission home page
   In Content Search bar at top of page enter:
   Operator contact information
   Select Oil and Gas Directory: Operator Contact Info
   Scroll down to Oil and Gas Directory Link
   Download Excel directory
   Look up name Oil and Gas Operators on this list

Next, add these names and addresses to your list and mail them an annual postcard/letter asking for donations.

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