

PUBLICIZING SAFETY

It is even possible to evoke a chuckle now and then

Most safety men have sweat it out at any number of safety meetings where they would have infinitely preferred to suffer a minor mishap than to endure what they knew was coming up for the remainder of the program

Moreover, they have no doubt heard this kind of premeditated boredom justified by the solemn pronouncement that "Safety is a serious subject, and must be taken seriously—it is no laughing matter"

No one can argue with that position. Of course, safety is a serious subject. Of course, an accident is not a laughing matter

Does it follow, then, that no one can put into safety—the enemy of accidents—some of the same techniques, the same sales appeal, the same sparkle that are used so successfully today to sell all the things people need to keep them shipshape?

If a pretty girl can sell shampoo or a home wave or an automobile, is it reasonable to expect that she can sell safety?

Pretty girls do get results in publicizing safety programs, especially if the newspapers and the radio and TV stations know that pretty girls are taking part. Those who value favorable mentions will not be offended if the papers or the stations prefer to use pictures of the pretty girls—or even the pretty girls themselves—to a picture of several mature gentlemen in solemn deliberation. (See Fig 8-2)

The pretty girls just may be able to brighten what might otherwise be a slightly dull and drab presentation of "The Cause"

This does not mean that the safety movement is going to be debased or cheapened or downgraded, and it does not mean that the male leaders of safety programs are going to be neglected. The media will use them for full publicity purposes

It is possible even to go so far as to get a cute child or baby into the act, or even a nice, faithful, shaggy dog, in the wistful hope that it may cadge extra space

Selecting the publicity audience

"Who must be reached with safety publicity?" This seems like a reasonable and fundamental question, but many outfits never think of it

The average industrial or manufacturing

company, of course, would scarcely mind if the whole populace insisted on reading or hearing or looking at the company's publicity and taking it deeply to heart. Certainly, to understate the case, the company would welcome a rush of new business following such public attention

The audience must always be chosen carefully, especially if the budget is tight or the staff is limited. In that case, it is logical to assume that the company would prefer to reach people who might be in a position to buy the product, or help the company in some other direct and profitable manner

How to get editors to help

This discussion must be interrupted at this point. First, it was essential to talk a little about the basic facts of public relations and publicity. Now, there are two questions to be answered

- 1 Is there an employee publication in the company?
- 2 Does the company have a publicity department?

If both answers are "yes," the safety man should get in touch with both these units *before* he does anything about publicizing the safety program

This step is vital. It not only assures professional skill and help for efforts to publicize safety activities, but it will save untold confusion, avoid duplication of effort, and possibly prevent real trouble

Why does such an obvious procedure have to be mentioned? The reason too often is that there sometimes is little, if any, communication between a safety engineer and the editor or publicity man

Communication between the safety engineer and the publicity man is indispensable, for these two *must work together*, or safety is not going to get the attention it deserves and needs

The safety man should tell the editor, if he has not done so before, that he is more determined than ever to cut accidents in the company and that he realizes he cannot get to first base without the editor's help and friendly advice

He should point out to the editor that he is fully aware of the necessity of employee and public acceptance of the safety program and that the editor is the man who can help get it