

A Guide to Conducting a Successful Plant Tour

Planning the Tour

Visits by legislators to your company's facilities are an effective way for grassroots participants to build relationships with legislators. Plant tours illustrate first hand how plant processes relate to legislative issues and are an excellent tool for grassroots advocacy. Tours showcase your facilities' environmental, health, and safety standards and connect members with the interconnect technology industry first hand. The following guidelines will help you plan a successful plant tour:

- **Determine the objectives for the visit.**
Decide what issues you want to discuss and how best to link the issues visually with plant operations. Find out if the legislator has particular interests.
- **Issue the invitation in writing.**
Offer a range of dates to accommodate busy legislative schedules; dates during congressional recesses are especially appropriate.
- **Announce the legislator's visit to all employees.**
Once the tour is confirmed, promote it throughout the company by distributing a brief biography of the legislator and information about the legislator's importance.
- **Invite your company's government relations staff to participate in the tour.**
You may also want to consider inviting a few top community leaders and industry association executives. Be careful, however, to avoid a large tour group.
- **Arrange for photographs during the tour.**
Work closely with the legislator's press aide on publicity and news coverage.
- **Offer to provide or arrange transportation.**
You may want to pay for or coordinate transportation to your facility for the legislator. (Check with your company's government relations or legal staff to see if there are policy or legal restrictions.)
- **Provide the legislator with information on your company prior to the visit.**
For example, include the total number of employees, the products your company manufactures, and the amount of sales.
- **Choose the tour guide with care.**
The guide should be articulate, knowledgeable about plant operations as well as issues that concern the company, and know by name everyone the legislator is likely to meet.
- **Map out the tour.**
Develop a tour schedule and route that illustrates the objectives you set for the visit. Know when the legislator has to leave, and allow for extra time if the legislator wants to remain longer in one location.
- **Prepare key equipment and safety gear ahead of time.**
Ensure that equipment is operating to provide action interest. Provide safety gear to all participants when necessary.
- **Rehearse the tour the day before.**
It may be helpful for participants to answer possible questions to prepare for issues the legislator might raise.

Scheduling the Tour

Your legislator is often in their district office during congressional recesses, which are especially good times to schedule a plant tour. State legislative recesses vary throughout the country. Contact your state legislators' offices to determine the recess schedule. Usual congressional recesses are:

President's Day Recess (February)
Spring Recess (March/April)
Memorial Day Recess (May)
Independence Day Recess (July)
Summer Recess (August - Labor Day)
Election season (September – November)
Fall/Winter Recess (November - January)

Conducting the Tour

A plant tour is an appropriate and useful way to educate legislators and help increase the 'comfort index' of grassroots participants. While a plant tour may be a familiar activity, the following tips will assist you in conducting a tour to meet your objectives:

- **Begin the visit in your office.**
Provide the legislator with an overview of important facts about your company's facilities and the tour, including environmental and energy problems and outlays, standards and advances in health and safety, and new products and equipment.
- **Talk in quiet areas along the way.**
Provide the legislator with an economic profile, including number of employees and amount of payroll, taxes, and local expenditures for materials and services. Be careful to avoid overwhelming the legislator with more technical or economic data than an interested layperson can absorb.
- **Be sure to introduce employees the legislator encounters during the tour.**
Remember, employees are the legislator's constituents. Also be sure to introduce all those with whom the legislator has a personal or political relationship as well as all grassroots program participants.
- **Conclude the tour with a meeting.**
A discussion provides an opportunity to answer the legislator's questions and reemphasize key messages and legislative issues in detail.

Follow-up after the Tour

Suggestions for follow up activities to build on the relationship established by the tour:

- **Send a thank you note to the legislator.**
Always thank the legislator in writing. Reiterate the points discussed on the visit.
- **Forward black and white prints taken during the tour for the legislator to use in his or her own newsletters.**

Sample Invitation Letter to Member of Congress—Plant Tour

Via Fax—1 page

Fax Number: [District Office]

Senator Jane Doe
United States Senate
XXXXXX (name) Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Doe:

I am writing to invite you to participate in a plant tour here at [company name]. As a member of the IPC – Association Connecting Electronics Industries, we encourage every member of Congress to visit the plants of their local printed board manufacturer for the opportunity to see how we manufacture critical electronics and to visit with our workers.

[Insert information describing your company 2-3 sentences. Include the number of employees.] This plant tour is an informal opportunity for you to see our plant and speak candidly with our employees. The format usually calls for the tour, brief refreshments, open discussion with our employees (including a question and comment period) and then a photo opportunity. We expect the entire event to take no more than 90 minutes. Let me suggest the following dates:

[Insert Day, Month, Date—suggested time frame]

[Insert Day, Month, Date—suggested time frame]

[Insert Day, Month, Date—suggested time frame]

We sincerely hope that you will be able to accept our invitation to participate. I will call your office regarding the details of this event. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sample Press Advisory—Plant Tour

NEWS ALERT

[Insert company logo]

[Alert Number]

NEWS CONTACTS:

[Company Contact] (000) 555-5555-[extension]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[CONTACT] (703) 522-6778

Press Advisory

[NAME OF COMPANY] PLANT TO HOST [NAME OF LAWMAKER]
[DATE]

When: [Name of company and city, state] will host [name of lawmaker] for a plant tour tomorrow morning as part of an effort to make legislators more aware of both the benefits pellet fuel manufacturers bring to communities and the unprecedented challenges now facing America's manufacturing sector.

The member of Congress will observe the facility's production of [give a brief description of what the lawmaker will see while on the plant tour] and offer brief remarks to gathering employees.

[Company name] is a member company of IPC- Association Connecting Electronics Industries, the trade association for the printed circuit board and electronics assembly industries. These critical electronic products are the foundation of all of America's consumer and industrial electronics, including defense, transportation, and telecommunications equipment.

Who: [Name of lawmaker]
[Company name]

Where: [Company name]
[Plant address]
[City, State, Zip]

When: [Date and time]

[Insert company address and Web site, if applicable]

Congressional Plant Tour Checklist

- Identify your Member of Congress
- Send a letter requesting your Member of Congress to visit your facility. Include available dates and times, as well as your company's line of business, location and number of employees.
- Contact your legislator's office 7-10 days after mailing your letter. If you need to locate phone numbers, call 202.225.3121 for a House Member or 202.224.3121 for a Senate Member.
- Contact your local print and broadcast media outlets. Invite them to participate in the plant tour.
- Ensure that your plant complies with OSHA, EPA, and any other regulations. Prepare your plant with signs marking any hazardous areas.
- Prepare a fact kit including industry- and company-specific information for the legislator to take with him or her. IPC can help you with industry information.
- Take photos during the tour, including pictures of the legislator with employees and a finished product.
- Send a thank you letter to the Member of Congress, and enclose copies of photos, media coverage and press clippings.
- Share your successful plant tour with IPC.