

Vigils for Survival organizing guide



The Game Plan

On the weekend in the middle of the Copenhagen conference — Dec. 11-13 — people will be gathering at important places all over the world for candlelight vigils, in solemn solidarity with the citizens of those nations who will be first to face the challenge to their very survival posed by climate change. Eventually all of us will be hard-pressed by rising seas, spreading drought, and temperatures too hot for growing food. But right now—this year, this decade—there are countries being pressed to the brink. They're at the forefront of a fight for real change in Copenhagen, and they need our support.

Sign up to host a vigil at
<http://350.org/vigil>

We will not sign a global suicide pact, in Copenhagen or anywhere." Instead, he and the others called for a "survival pact," for commitments by the developed world to cut emissions enough to get the atmospheric concentration of co2 back to 350. They know the simple, mathematical truth of global warming: 350 equals Survival.

President Mohamed Nasheed of the Maldives

1. Choose a location

U.S. embassies

Outside of U.S. embassies around the world, we will light candles of hope - hope that the country with the most responsibility, and with the most capability to lead the world to a clean energy future, will reverse direction and be a leader, rather than an obstacle, to international action on climate change. Choose whatever is widely available for shining light where you are - candles, LED lights or flashlights, menorahs, or whatever you can find, and gather peacefully outside the U.S. embassy or consulate in your city. Sing, hold signs, read Maldivian President Mohammed Nasheed's inspiring speech for survival, and be sure to document the event.

Local government offices and iconic places

Not everyone has a U.S. embassy in town, or maybe it's simply not feasible to gather outside the embassy where you are. Feel free to choose a place in your town that is meaningful to your community - your town square, local government, president's house, coastline, mountaintop, or whatever makes sense for where you are. If you are in the United States, Australia or Europe, it may makes sense to plan your vigil outside a Senator's, MP's or MEP's office to make sure they get the message.

Candlelight marches

Maybe it will make sense to send this message to a variety of politicians, and movement always adds something special to an action - create a march route by several embassies, or iconic places in your community.

Be creative!

If your MP or Senator is going to be speaking at a local school auditorium that night, hold a candlelight vigil there. If there is a place nearby that you love that is being affected by climate change, hold a vigil there. Think outside the box!

note: Depending on the place you choose and local laws, you may need a permit for your event. Most of the time they're very easy to get: just call your local police department or town authority to find out. Local shopping centres and other privately owned locations often don't allow events such as this - if in doubt, check.

2. Work out the details

Invite your friends, neighbors, and local organizations to help in sponsoring and organizing the action. Think outside the box about who to reach out to - maybe the local church, mosque, synagogue, labor union, sports team, university, or arts cooperative would be interested in getting involved in the issue. This is when it gets fun! Take care of logistical details as soon as you can (this is why you want friends to help you out.) Since your vigil will be in the evening, you might think of hosting it on Friday evening as politicians may be leaving their offices. Other important details to consider include the timing of the action, directions, permits for use of public spaces if necessary, sponsorships, etc.



3. Spread the word

This is super important. A vigil of 5-10 people can be very powerful, but the more people attending your event the more impact we can have. We will email people in your area and invite them to attend, but it's up to you to get on the local radio station, ask organizations to include the action information in newsletters and bulletins, and put up posters all over town. Vigils are particularly powerful if they are inter-generational--so don't forget to invite parents, children, grandparents, and grandchildren to join in. You can spread the word online using our tell-a-friend tool and twitter. And don't forget to invite all your friends to our facebook event.

4. Get materials together

Posters + Banners. We've created some downloadable posters that you can print out. Having big, clear signs is really important both for passersby and for media and photos. Try to print these as big as you can, and bring plenty of spares for others. You can also make your own banner (the most fun you've had since fingerpainting as a kid). Use your banner from October 24, or make a new banner with "350=Survival" on it. Check out our easy banner-making guide [here](#).



Candles. An essential part of any candlelight vigil. We're asking guests to bring their own, but lots of people will forget or turn up at the last minute so please bring plenty of spare candles! Bought in bulk, they're reasonably cheap. Plumbers candles (available from hardware shops) are excellent for

vigils: cheap, long burning, just the right size and come in big packs. Wax hurts. A good tip is to pick up a pack of cupcake papers from the grocery shop. You can cut or rip a hole in them, put the candle through and it will catch all the wax. You can do the same with paper or plastic cups, or simply bring a roll of waxed baking paper or paper towel. Alternatively you may like to use tea candles in glasses or paper cups.

Photos. International negotiations are dry, boring and bureaucratic. The aim of our vigils is to remind the world that climate change is about real people, families and livelihoods. With this

in mind, you may like to bring photos that show why tackling climate change is important to you, eg. of your children, family, farm etc. Also, print out and bring photos from any October 24 International Day of Climate Action events you attended -- those beautiful images still resonate throughout the world!

For other materials like flyers, posters, stickers and more, check out our Vigil Materials page.

5. Tell the Media

Not every event will attract media attendance - but a bit of simple media outreach dramatically increases your chances of media coverage. Think about what print, radio, television, and blogs you'd want to have cover your event, and start getting in touch now!

We've also put together a sample advisory (coming soon...) that you should tailor and send to local reporters, talking points (coming soon...) to help you speak to any members of the press that do attend, and a script (coming soon...) to make reminder calls to reporters.

It's important to contact media before the day of your event, and make a few reminder calls to reporters. Here's our suggested media outreach timeline:

Monday, Dec 7th - Send out your media advisory and begin to alert media about your event.

24 hours before your vigil - Make follow up calls to media, send media advisory again and print copies to bring to your event.

8 hours before your vigil - Make another final call to the media asking them to come to the vigil.

6. Take Action!

This is the fun part! Gather together, sing, pray and ask community leaders to offer words of hope and inspiration. One idea is to read aloud Maldives' President Mohammed Nasheed's recent speech. At some point be sure to take a photo of the crowd with your candles and banners front and center. Check out our photo guide for some tips. Have a fun and meaningful evening, knowing that you're forming a very important part of a giant global movement to stop climate change!

6. Follow up

This part is very important: as soon as your action is over, be sure to select your best photo and upload it to 350.org. You might want to designate a volunteer to help with this. This is so important because we need your picture to be able to deliver the strongest possible message to the media, and to the world's decision-makers who will be in Copenhagen at that very moment.

Tips for a Successful Vigil

Arrive at least 30 minutes early and bring extra candles with you! You can make your spot visible by setting up tea lights in paper bags around the vigil area (be careful not to burn the bags.)

Designate a volunteer (or yourself) to be the MC, and a few other people to hand out posters and candles. Decide who will pass out media advisories and talk to any press who come to your vigil -- make sure to get contact information from any press who cover your event.

Place your posters and signs in prominent locations.

When you're ready to begin, gather everyone up in a central location to hear the speakers and welcome everyone to the event, talk about the purpose of the event and explain that thousands of others are happening simultaneously around the world.

If you want, introduce a few local speakers. Ask each speaker to please keep their remarks to less than 5 minutes.