Coffee Break Training - Fire Prevention and Public Education

Public Fire Education Planning — A Five-step Process

No. FM-2014-1 January 2, 2014

Learning Objective: *The student will be able to articulate the purpose of the publication guide, "Public Fire Education Planning — A Five Step Process."*

Current fire departments use many terms for educational fire and injury prevention programs. Programs differ in size and approach, but the goals are the same: Change the behavior of the public so that there are fewer dangerous situations, fires and injuries.

This U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) publication, "Public Fire Education Planning," presents a five-step planning process for developing and implementing successful fire and life safety public education programs. Planning is the process that ensures that program strategies and initiatives really address the community problems, whether it's identifying the fire and injury risks in the community, developing and implementing a program, or evaluating the results. This guide takes you through that planning process.

A successful program follows a five-step process:

1. **Conduct a community analysis.**
2. **Develop community partnerships.**
3. **Create an intervention strategy.**
4. **Implement the strategy.**
5. **Evaluate the results.**

The temptation to "just get something implemented" is hard to resist. Unfortunately, this is a trap. Yes, it's easy to schedule some presentations at a school; pass out brochures, stickers and plastic helmets; and do some media interviews. But do those presentations address the community's worst fire or injury problems? Do the solutions being promoted really work? Is the appropriate target audience even being reached? Are community groups working together? Is the program being implemented in the best way?

A "ready, fire, aim" approach will not hit the target. It can give the impression that the department is out there educating the public, but it may achieve little else. Successfully reducing fires and preventable injuries involves effective community planning. Notable public education programs around the country always prove this to be true.

This guide recognizes that fire prevention is now an important part of the larger goal of preventing injuries and unsafe situations. Fire departments often provide Emergency Medical Services, and preventing injury, illness and other unsafe acts is part of the mission of saving lives.

Source: USFA publication FA-219, "Public Fire Education Planning — A Five Step Process," June 2008.

To download a copy of this publication, follow this link: http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa-219.pdf.

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Public Fire Education Planning — A Five-step Process — Step 1: Conduct a Community Risk Analysis

No. FM-2014-2 January 9, 2014

Learning Objective: *The student will know the process of conducting a community risk assessment (Step 1 of 5) as presented in the publication "Public Fire Education Planning — A Five Step Process."*

What is a community risk analysis? A community risk analysis is a process that identifies fire and life safety problems and the demographic characteristics of those at risk in a community. A thorough risk analysis provides insight into the worst fire and life safety problems and the people who are affected. The analysis results create the foundation for developing risk-reduction and community education programs.

Conducting a community risk analysis is the first step toward deciding which fire or injury problem needs to be addressed. Risk analysis is a planned process that must be ongoing, as communities and people are constantly changing.

Why conduct a community risk analysis? Fire and rescue departments must use facts in order to correctly identify leading safety risks that need attention. A community risk analysis will provide this data.

Too often, an objective and systematic community risk analysis is a step that is overlooked in the community education process. Many emergency service organizations address risks based on a perceived need for service that isn't really there. This approach can be costly (i.e., misdirected resources, continued property loss, injuries or deaths).

It is easy to become distracted from local issues by big media splashes about national happenings. Don't let that happen; stay focused! Invest the time to conduct an objective community risk analysis. Having facts about the leading causes of risk and the people being affected will set the stage for a successful risk-reduction process.

Objectivity means using reliable data to make conclusions based on facts, not beliefs. The analysis provides a factual overview of the risk issues using the information obtained, and it should be used to develop a risk-reduction proposal. This will produce a picture of what is wrong and who is at risk.

What does a community risk analysis include?

- Identify data to be analyzed.
- Develop a community risk profile.
- Write a problem statement.
- Prioritize issues.
- Identify target areas and populations.

Source: U.S. Fire Administration publication FA-219, "Public Fire Education Planning — A Five Step Process," June 2008.

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Public Fire Education Planning — A Five-step Process — Step 2: Developing Community Partnerships

No. FM-2014-3 January 16, 2014

Learning Objective: *The student will understand the importance of developing community partnerships (Step 2 of 5) in the publication "Public Fire Education Planning — A Five Step Process."*

What community resources are needed for risk reduction? A broader spectrum of resources is required to conduct a successful risk-reduction effort. Examples of additional important resources include the following:

- **Knowledge:** Knowledge of the problem and possible solutions, including a factual description of the community and its associated risks, is very important. Such knowledge is needed for an accurate community risk analysis. Think teamwork!
- **In-kind support:** This involves resources provided in lieu of money, including equipment, printed materials, supplies and personal effort.
- **Political support:** Support for the risk-reduction process from elected officials is very helpful to finding success.
- **Community support:** Partnerships with people and organizations in the community can identify risks, planning measures and resources required to get the risk-reduction process started and the program implemented.
- **Emphasis is often placed on finances, but additional resources are important.**

What is a community partner? A community partner is a person, group or organization willing to join forces and address a community risk. It is important to identify a group of partners who have a stake in the success of the risk-reduction program.

Who are some possible community partners?

- Groups already interested or addressing the same or a similar risk issue.
- Members of the population who are affected by the risk issue.
- People/Groups who feel the financial impact of the risk issue.
- Groups already providing services to the population affected by the risk issue.
- Community service and advocacy groups.
- Groups that can help deliver messages.

Consider forming a planning team. Discuss your organization's intention of forming a planning team to reduce the risk problem. Explain what resources your organization can provide.

Summary

Community partnerships are needed in order to reduce any significant fire or injury risk.

Source: U.S. Fire Administration publication FA-219, "Public Fire Education Planning — A Five Step Process," June 2008.

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Public Fire Education Planning — A Five-step Process — Step 3: Create an Intervention Strategy for a Local Risk Issue

No. FM-2014-4 January 23, 2014

Learning Objective: *The student will understand the key points in creating an intervention strategy (Step 3 of 5) in the publication "Public Fire Education Planning — A Five Step Process."*

What is an intervention strategy? An intervention strategy is the beginning of the detailed work necessary for the development of a successful fire or life safety risk-reduction program. The strategy should include what will be done, where it will be implemented, how the implementation will occur, and who will conduct the program once it is developed. It also should include an evaluation component that measures the effectiveness of the process and the program. Creating an intervention strategy requires a carefully thought-out plan of action developed through a group effort.

Why develop an intervention strategy? Taking the time needed to design a quality intervention strategy will help gain long-term risk-reduction success.

Steps for Developing an Intervention Strategy

- **Convene the community planning team and review the community profile and the problem statement.** Everyone should have a factual description of the community and the problem.
- **Identify places for intervention.** Another way to characterize where the risk occurs is to look at the geographic distribution of the risk in the city or town.
- **Identify potential target populations and the physical locations for intervention opportunities.** It is critical for the planning team to identify who the risk affects most often and where it happens. Sequential analysis of a typical incident is helpful to consider many prevention interventions.
- **Identify specific interventions.** Most successful risk-reduction efforts make use of combined prevention interventions. Several prevention interventions include:
  - —**Education:** providing risk and prevention information for the purpose of changing behavior.
  - —**Engineering:** using technology to create safer products or modifying the environment where the risk is occurring.
  - —**Enforcement:** rules that require the use of a safety initiative.
  - —**Economic incentive:** measures used to influence behavior either positively or negatively. Positive economic incentives reward people monetarily for behaving in a certain manner or making certain choices. Negative economic incentives punish people monetarily for behaving in a certain manner or making certain choices.
  - —**Emergency response:** These interventions are used by emergency responders (fire/EMS/law) to mitigate risk.
- **Identify required resources.** These are the supporting resources for each intervention.
- **Develop an evaluation plan.** The plan outlines the specific tasks to be performed, a timeline to measure completion, and benchmarks used to monitor success of the strategy.

Source: U.S. Fire Administration publication FA-219, "Public Fire Education Planning — A Five Step Process," June 2008.

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Public Fire Education Planning — A Five-step Process — Step 4: Implement the Intervention Strategy — Putting the Plan Into Action

No. FM-2014-5 January 30, 2014

Learning Objective: *The student will understand the key points in implementing an intervention strategy (Step 4 of 5) in the publication "Public Fire Education Planning — A Five Step Process."*

Implementing the Prevention Intervention Strategy

Implementing the strategy involves testing the interventions and then putting the plan into action in the community. Sometimes modifications are made to the program as the result of a pilot implementation. In a real sense, the implementation step is where "the rubber meets the road."

Think about some typical interventions developed for a cooking fire problem. The interventions may include awareness education for the older adults and for those who provide services to the older adults. Other interventions may include modifications of the kitchens of older adults. The implementation plan identifies the steps to take to bring those interventions into the community.

Steps for Putting the Plan Into Action

The implementation plan outlines the steps for implementing the program in the community and provides the following details:

- How the program will be implemented, including when, how long, where, etc.
- The roles and responsibilities of the program implementation team.
- The process for the pilot test implementation.
- Provisions for making any modifications to the program based on the results of the pilot implementation.
- A predelivery checklist identifying tasks that must be done prior to the implementation.
- A description of potential implementation problems and contingencies.

An action plan is a step-by-step outline of work that needs to be done in order to meet the stated objective. Each objective requires its own action plan. An Action Planning Chart is a useful tool that can be used in planning the implementation as well as in monitoring progress.

Develop the implementation plan by working together with the community team and representatives from the target audience. The implementation plan simply identifies the best approach for putting the interventions into action.

Source: U.S. Fire Administration publication FA-219, "Public Fire Education Planning — A Five Step Process," June 2008.

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