



International  
Association  
of Fire Chiefs



National  
Fire Protection  
Association

# Fire Officer

Principles and Practice  
THIRD EDITION



## Chapter 11 Working in the Community (Fire Officer I)

# Fire Officer I Objectives

- Discuss the role of demographics in fire department–community relations.
- Discuss the role of fire safety education in risk reduction.

# Fire Officer I Objectives

- List and describe opportunities for public education.
- List and describe steps to develop public education programs at the local level.

# Introduction

- Volunteer fire departments were often established by community members after a local disaster.
- During the 1800s, fire stations were often used for public meetings and assemblies.

# Introduction

- The fire station continues to be viewed as a member of the community.
- The fire officer is the fire department representative.
  - Ensures that the community's needs are being addressed

# Understanding the Community

- Fire officer should develop a good understanding of the population and demographics of the area.
  - A variety of techniques may be applied to ensure that the department is delivering the appropriate services and information to the community.

# Understanding the Community

- The United States is becoming increasingly more multiethnic.
  - Emergency services and public education have to meet the needs of the community.

# Risk Reduction

- The fire service has a history of striving to reduce fire risk.
- Today's fire service takes on the role of preventing many nonfire incidents.
  - Some degree of culture shift is needed.

# Two Levels of Need

- Systemic needs
  - Addressed through developing programs to reduce risk
  - Often identified at the departmental or community level

# Two Levels of Need

- Individual needs
  - Can be encountered in private homes
  - Fire officer needs to learn which community programs are available

# Two Levels of Need

- A fire officer should be knowledgeable about community programs before being asked for the information.
  - Brochures or information packets

# Responding to Public Inquiries

- Treat all requests professionally.
- Seek out any unknown information immediately.
- If the request is not within your level of authority, provide a method of moving the request to the level where it can be resolved.

# Responding to Public Inquiries

- Many departments have specific policies on handling citizen inquiries.
  - Understand and follow these policies to avoid the appearance of unfairness or disciplinary action.

# Public Education

- Programs vary greatly among fire departments.
  - Some have staff bureaus for public education programs.
  - Some adopt national programs.
  - Often a program is developed at the local level.

# Public Education

- Public education programs:
  - Learn Not to Burn
  - Risk Watch
  - Stop, Drop, and Roll
  - Getting to Know Fire

LEARN NOT TO BURN® - LEVEL 1

**STOP, DROP, AND ROLL - FLYER**

*If your clothes catch fire:*

- 1. Stop**  
Stop what you are doing.
- 2. Drop**  
Drop to the ground.
- 3. Roll**  
Cover your face with your hands, keep your legs straight and roll over and over and back and forth to put the fire out.

**Get help from a grown-up!**



NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION • BATTERMAN PARK • QUINCY, MA 02269 • © 2012

WWW.NFPA.ORG/LEARNNOTTOBURN® - LEARN NOT TO BURN® IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF NFPA.

Reproduced with permission from NFPA copyright ©, all rights reserved.

# Public Education

- Public fire education programs (cont'd):
  - Change Your Clock—Change Your Battery
  - Fire safety for babysitters
  - Fire safety for seniors
  - Wildland fire prevention programs

# Public Education

- Fire officers often have to transmit the program's message to its intended audience.
- The goal of a public safety education program is to prevent injury, death, or loss due to fire or other incidents.

# Public Education

- Four objectives:
  - Educate on how to change behavior
  - Instruct on how to perform specific tasks
  - Inform about fire safety issues
  - Distribute information on timely subjects

# Public Education

- An educational presentation is successful when it causes a change of behavior.



© Jones & Bartlett Learning. Photographed by Glen E. Elman.

# National and Regional Public Education Programs

- Developed by:
  - National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)
  - United States Fire Administration (USFA)
  - Other associations and groups

# National and Regional Public Education Programs

- Fire Prevention Week
  - Roots in the Great Chicago Fire
  - Observed annually
  - Officially sponsored by NFPA



Reproduced with permission from NFPA: Copyright © 2013.

# National and Regional Public Education Programs

- Risk Watch
  - Developed by the NFPA
  - School-based program
  - Gives children and families the skills and knowledge needed to create safer homes and communities
  - Divides curriculum into lessons

# National and Regional Public Education Programs

- CERT
  - Helps citizens understand how to help in many disaster-type situations
  - Groups can provide assistance to victims and collect disaster intelligence



© Wilfredo Lee/AP Photos

# National and Regional Public Education Programs

- CERT (cont'd)
  - The Emergency Management Institute and National Fire Academy adopted and expanded the CERT materials.
  - CERT was moved under the Citizen Corps in 2004.
  - Instructors complete a CERT Train-the-Trainer Program.

# National and Regional Public Education Programs

- CERT training topics:
  - Fire safety and utility control
  - Disaster medical operations
  - Light search-and-rescue operations
  - Disaster psychology
  - Terrorism and CERT

# National and Regional Public Education Programs

- Maintaining CERT involvement:
  - CERT members should receive recognition for completing their training.
  - Trainers should offer periodic refresher sessions.

# Locally Developed Programs

- Many regional and national public education programs have been started within local fire departments.
- Examples:
  - Brush abatement programs
  - Fireplace ash disposal programs

# Locally Developed Programs

- Five-step planning process:
  1. Identify the problem.
  2. Select the method.
  3. Design the program.
  4. Implement the program.
  5. Evaluate the program.

# Summary

- The fire department is a community-based function of local government.
- Each community has special needs.
- The best method of preventing fire injuries and deaths is to prevent the fire.
- The same is true for other types of incidents.

# Summary

- Some requests that citizens make may not be within the fire officer's authority.
- Goals, objectives, content, and delivery for public education programs vary.
- Specialized associations and groups have developed national and regional public education programs.

# Summary

- The development of public education programs is usually assigned to an individual or group specializing in the area or to a fire officer.