



Dear National Fire Academy Student:

Congratulations on your acceptance into the U.S. Fire Administration's National Fire Academy's *Changing American Family at Risk* (R348) course, **a six-day class**. This course is designed for you to apply strategies for reaching America's families at the neighborhood level to protect them from fire. **The course is less about the families themselves, and more about strategies at the neighborhood level.**

Content includes the changing family structure in America; the means and methods for reaching families on the hazards of fire; and the relationship between the American family and fire risk. The course teaches approaches to create positive fire safety interventions for families at the neighborhood level.

Students engage in new strategies for establishing positive relationships, which lead to behavioral change. The course also presents future strategies to create sustainable change in the neighborhood resulting in a reduction of the fire problem. Please refer to the next page for a more detailed explanation of course content.

Changing American Family at Risk is challenging and innovative. The course is designed to maximize interactivity among participants and instructors. A variety of instructional methods are employed. We look forward to having you as a class participant.

It is important to note that this is a 6-day class, and the first day of class will begin on Sunday at approximately 8 a.m. just after orientation. Orientation will normally commence at 8 a.m.; however, make sure you confirm this when you check in. Subsequent classes will meet daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. with graduation occurring on Friday at 4 p.m. Because of this schedule, you will be provided lodging for Friday night. Evening classes may be required.

You will have two requirements to complete before coming to class.

- Three items to bring to class with you.
- An assignment to complete and mail to the National Fire Academy.

You must bring to class the following three items (if available):

1. Data concerning the fire risks (most frequent fire causes) in a specific neighborhood or population group in your community.
2. Any information about education programs that may already be addressing those issues.
3. General demographic information about the make up of your community.

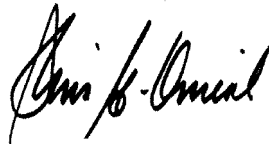
Please know that the more detail regarding this information the better.

Your second assignment includes reading the attached "Comprehensive Fire Service Marketing Opportunities Through Customer-Centered Prevention" by Ben May. After reading this article, answer the four questions included in this packet and please submit 2 weeks prior to the beginning of class to the National Fire Academy.

Increasing numbers of students and instructors are bringing laptop computers to campus. You alone are responsible for the security and maintenance of your equipment. The Academy cannot provide you with computer software, hardware, or technical support to include disks, printers, scanners, etc. There are a limited number of 120 Volt AC outlets in the classrooms. A Student Computer Lab is located in Building D and is available for all students to use. It is open daily with technical support provided in the evenings. This lab uses Windows XP and Office 2003 as the software standard.

Should you need additional information or have questions pertaining to course content or requirements, you should contact Mr. Gerry Bassett, Fire Prevention Public Education Curriculum Training Specialist, at (301) 447-1094.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Denis Onieal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Denis Onieal, Superintendent
National Fire Academy
U.S. Fire Administration

Other Course Information

Course Content by Unit:

Introduction--Identify the course sequence and goal, and why the focus is on the family and neighborhood level. How the course connects with NFA public education curriculum.

Changing Family in America--Understanding of America's changing communities, neighborhoods, and family demographics and how they may contribute to fire risk.

Fire and Human Behavior--Analyze a fire event (by stages) in order to identify primary prevention interventions.

Social Marketing--Value the potential for social marketing to create positive fire safety change; the four Ps of social marketing.

Establishing Relationships with the Family--Develop strategies for establishing positive relationships with families in a neighborhood; community equity and organizational equity.

Promoting Behavioral Change--Develop strategies to elicit behavioral change; the ABC Model for root cause; windows of opportunity.

When Behavioral Change is not Enough--Given a fire problem in a neighborhood, develop sustainable change strategies to reduce risk; local, State, and Federal resources; involvement of organizational leader.

Class Project

During the class, you will be completing a class project which will be due at the end of class. The project will be evaluated and returned to you before then end of the course. The successful outcome is dependent on the precourse data and information that you bring to class. Your instructors will guide you through the process, explaining each part of the project during class. At the successful completion of your project, your Chief or Department Director will be sent a letter with general information about your project. This letter will communicate your work here at the Academy and provide a tangible product for you to present upon your return. More importantly, it will provide an outline that you can use to design a fire prevention program in neighborhoods in your community, considering the factors discussed in class.

Comprehensive Fire Service Marketing Opportunities Through Customer-Centered Prevention Gain Visibility Before the Fire Happens

By: Ben May for *Firehouse.Com*, with permission.

Comprehensive fire and safety prevention--largely in the form of education--presents the largest opportunity for any department to increase its awareness in the community while achieving its primary goal of keeping its citizens safe from harm. It would not be too much to say that the effectiveness of fire and safety education is to a great degree dependent on the effectiveness of its marketing. It would also be true to say that fire prevention and education affords the largest opportunity to affect the most people with our visibility, messages and image.

The Opportunity

The issue of prevention is probably the single most important emerging opportunity for any department to gain visibility among the citizens, institutions and businesses it protects. The great opportunity prevention provides is that the department can actually achieve one of the primary functions of its mission--stopping fires and accidents before they occur--through the marketing mechanism, and to the most people.

Think of it this way. How many people really use our service at any one time compared to those that don't? When our citizens do need us, they are usually not in a position to receive a safety message because by the time they call us, it is already too late. There is also the fact that they may be in a life or death situation. At the very least, they are in a state of extreme stress. Not really a conducive atmosphere for learning a safety message.

- **Discuss: [Fire Service Marketing In The Public Information & Media Relations Forums on Firehouse.com](#)**

So the best time to be proactive in reaching the most people is when we can deliver our messages to large amounts of people or to individual business owners in a setting, which they are conducive to receiving our message, and in seeing us as the keeper of the safety toolbox. Each is dependent on the other. This is the crux of effective marketing and sales.

On the one hand, the reason this opportunity has emerged deals with the changing nature of our communities, the proliferation of information and the communication mechanisms, which make it more readily available. On the other hand, marketing has been associated with prevention and safety education since these programs began. This kind of marketing is called "social marketing" because it is aimed at changing behavior.

Our History is Based on Suppression

The history of the development of the U.S. fire service has followed a suppression orientation since its foundation in the 1700s. Typically, the individual who wants to become a firefighter is a mission-driven, action-oriented person who sees him or herself as contributing to the common good of his or her community: an action hero or heroine. The majority of training and preparation is directed toward the goal of taking action in emergency situations, whether a fire, injury or accident. These emergency incidents range from small car accidents to multiple home conflagrations or mass casualties such as the terrorist attacks on 9/11.

However, as first responders, it is important to view ourselves as the source with the responsibility for all forms of fire and life safety protection. This means prevention and education first. While we are trained to respond to action when necessary, it is our mission to lead the community in preventing the incident before it happens, if possible. Enter the marketing mechanism.

What is Comprehensive Prevention?

As first responders offering a wide range of safety services, the fire department has the responsibility for over 17 different services including EMS, HazMat and Homeland Security. Approximately 20 percent of actual responses involve firefighting.

I came across the term "comprehensive prevention" in the recent edition of *Managing Fire and Rescue Services* edited by Denny Compton and John Granito. The term is chock full of marketing opportunities. Most marketers want to "own" the market for all their products and services. The more we use the term comprehensive prevention, the more our customers will get the picture that we do offer a wide range of services and they do not all involve fire or responding to critical incidents. So in this way comprehensive means the entire array of safety services.

According to Jim Crawford, Fire Marshall of Portland, OR, and the author of the chapter on Comprehensive Prevention Programs in *Managing Fire and Rescue Services*, comprehensive prevention involves the following key elements: engineering, enforcement, education and investigation. Engineering involves built-in mitigation measures and fixed fire protection before building construction begins.

The fire marshal's office has the responsibility of on going plans review for current code maintenance. Enforcement means the establishment of local regulations which mandate how a building will be constructed to mitigate fire and life loss. However, engineering and enforcement can only go so far in ensuring the protection of lives and property.

Most fires--approximately 80 percent--still occur in single-family dwellings in lower income areas. We know that automatic in-home sprinklers will mitigate the fire problem. However, the political process of gaining the kind of legislation for this protection is slow

in coming and even when passed will first apply to new construction. There will be little or no effect on low-income groups with old construction.

As the demographics of our country continue to change the need for fire and life safety education will increase dramatically. Both in-home mitigation and behavior change are marketing problems that can be addressed through a marketing plan. Finally, investigation is the fourth element of comprehensive prevention. The creation of almost all fire codes are the result of lessons learned from a past disaster--from the Iroquois Theatre fire in Chicago in 1903, to the Triangle Shirtwaist fire in New York in 1911, to the MGM Las Vegas fire in 1980, to the 9/11 World Trade Center terrorist attack in New York in 2001.

The Marketing Challenge

A number of significant challenges now face the fire service. Our communities continue to see us in a positive light. However, when it comes to changing behavior for our citizens protection--whether in the form of educating the public or enforcing mandates--the most effective marketing tools are of critical use to each fire department. Lack of financial and human resources present major obstacles to fulfillment of the prevention and marketing mission.

The changing nature of our society in composition, income, size and cultural biases coupled with the lack of local departmental resources present a significant challenge to the fire service. Add to this the increasing threat of hazardous technologies and preparations for the protection of the homeland. Some of the more significant forces pulling at our ability to achieve our prevention goals are: the cultural bias of the United States that technology is the only answer to our problems, our attitudes toward fire, and the fire service's bias toward suppression as reflected in its training and resources.

In a typical department less than 2 percent of the budget is devoted to fire and safety education, usually staffed with the fewest number of professionals and paid the lowest salary. These unsung heroes (in more cases, heroines) are ingenious in their ability to do their jobs effectively with the meager resources they usually possess. Yet they deliver our message to the largest number of citizens in many cases. Luckily, programs such as "Learn Not to Burn" and "Risk Watch" from NFPA have extended the ability of the fire educator to deliver the message in our schools. The "silver bullet" of technology will not impact low income housing one iota, nor will education for immigrant groups that do not have English as a first language.

Phil Schaenaman of Tridata has produced a number of seminal works comparing Asian and European fire prevention education programs to those in the United States. The most significant differences deal with the way these other cultures view safety education and personal responsibility as a priority. When an accidental fire occurs in a home in Japan, the citizen is ostracized. In the US we bring blankets. This is not a judgment on either approach. It just gives us a wider range of understanding for educational and mandated options.

Fire officers in Japan and France, for example, are all assigned to prevention first and for long periods. They are taught that their primary function is that of an engineer who suppresses fire as a last option. This is simply a matter of emphasis. It is subtle, but it affects the way a firefighter views him or herself on the job, and how the community views safety and their firefighters. In fact, the Institution of Fire Engineers, a UK-based society of firefighters, uses the term engineers to apply to all professionals who deal with fire prevention and suppression. This especially includes firefighters--as engineers. So how we see ourselves is one of the key issues with which we must deal when we grapple with prevention and education. It is the excitement factor.

We must look beyond suppression as a necessary function of last resort and see ourselves in a multi-dimensional manner, delivering a wide array of services and knowledge to help our citizens protect themselves with us as the activator and guide. This means we must understand how to instill the proactive, mission-centered mentality to prevention and education so that we are serving the need of our citizen customers for safety. Thanks to the proliferation of information, the increased interest in personal and national safety among the aging baby boomers and all of society since 9/11, we have a real opportunity to fulfill our mission while increasing or marketing support.

Here is a challenge: read your department's mission statement. I will bet you in 95 percent of the cases; the words prevention and education are in the first or second sentence. It is time to give them the priority they deserve as stated in the departmental mission. Their effective marketing can result in a quantum leap for our awareness and image in our communities, while fulfilling our primary mission.

Works Cited

- Corbett, Glen P. "The Fire Prevention Bureau." *The Fire Chief's Handbook*. 5th ed. Bachtler and Brennan. Chapter 27.
- Crawford, Jim. "Comprehensive Prevention Programs." *Managing Fire and Rescue Services*. Dennis Compton and John Granito.
- Nachbar, Mary. "Public Education." *The Fire Chief's Handbook*. 5th ed. Bachtler and Brennan. Chapter 27.
- Schaenaman, Phillip. *Concepts in International Fire Protection*. Tridata Corporation.

Ben May, a Firehouse.com and Firehouse Magazine contributing editor, has been developing the discipline of fire and emergency services marketing management for the past 15 years. He has been a firefighter for Montgomery County, MD, Fire and Rescue and fire commissioner for the Woodinville, WA, Fire and Life Safety District. May holds a bachelor's degree in public affairs from the University of Oklahoma and a master's degree in international communication from the American University in Washington, D.C. He has been a vice president of two international marketing firms over the last 25 years, and now is responsible for business development for Epcot at Walt Disney World Resort. You can e-mail Ben at firecom1@aol.com

