



Texas Department of Insurance

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News Release

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State Fire Marshal's Office Receives Grant Award of \$566,500

AUSTIN – The State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO), a division of the Texas Department of Insurance, was awarded \$566,500 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Assistance to Firefighters, Fire Prevention and Safety Grant. The SFMO will use the award to educate Texas university students about fire safety, escape planning, and life saving. As part of this effort, the SFMO will expand its existing Have an Exit Strategy program to all public university campuses in the state. In addition, the federal grant will allow the SFMO to provide life saving information and strategies to over 1 million Texas college students.

“The Have an Exit Strategy program encourages people to identify two ways out of any building and reminds them that the best way out of a building may not be the way they came in,” said State Fire Marshal Paul Maldonado. “Have an Exit Strategy uses simple, powerful language and imagery to encourage students to develop an exit plan where they live, work, and play.”

The Have an Exit Strategy program will also help universities meet the requirements of U.S. House Bill 4137, the Higher Education Campus Fire Safety Standards and Measures Bill, as well as Texas Senate Bill 1138 and companion Texas House Bill 2639, which requires student organizations at public and private post secondary institutions to provide at least one risk management program per academic year.

The Texas program was developed after a study of the February 20, 2003 fire at “The Station” nightclub in West Warwick, Rhode Island, in which 100 patrons died. In 2004 the SFMO began random inspection of bars, nightclubs, lounges and dancehalls in eight Texas counties. Of the 189 establishments inspected, 96% had violations involving blocked exits.

The Have an Exit Strategy program began as a pilot project at the University of Texas at Austin in October 2006, with creative and financial support from ThinkStreet and the Lower Colorado River Authority. With the University's assistance, the program continues to provide incoming freshmen with a packet of fire safety information, and Have an Exit Strategy messages are posted in classroom buildings, on busses, and included in announcements made during major events, such as UT football games. The successful pilot program will serve as the model for the statewide implementation made possible by the FEMA grant.

For more information, visit: www.tdi.state.tx.us/fire/exitstrategy/index.html.

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