



Coffee Break Training-Community Risk Reduction

Community Involvement in Risk-Reduction Planning

No. CR-2015-9 November 4, 2015

Learning Objective: The student will be able to explain benefits of involving the community in risk-reduction planning.

In the fire service, programs are often designed for the community without community input. The most successful risk-reduction efforts are those that involve the community in the planning and solution process. Think about it as using mutual aid. In fire suppression, large fires require mutual aid. The same strategy should be applied to community risk-reduction programs.

How can your department benefit from involving the community in risk-reduction planning? One of the most important benefits is that risk issues become community problems versus fire department problems. Partnerships are established, so the community as a whole is involved. This allows more minds, bodies and resources to tackle the problem. More importantly, the tasks of targeting the problem, developing a plan, and implementing the solutions are shared.

There are a couple of options as to when to ask the community to participate:

- The community can be invited to assist after the community profile and problem identification are completed.
- The community can be invited to assist in determining what problems should be addressed.

The success of your program depends on engaging the right mix of people. Be broad and inclusive in selecting your stakeholders. There are two types of stakeholders:

- Those involved in implementing the program.
- Those served or affected by the program.

Those involved in implementing the program include community members, sponsors, partners, funders and staff members. Those served or affected by the program include neighborhood organizations, advocacy groups and community residents, as well as elected and appointed officials.

Make sure that those served or affected by the program represent a demographic cross section of the community by age, gender, race/ethnicity, income, education, sexual orientation, language and employment. Stakeholders must be part of the program so that their unique perspectives are understood. When stakeholders are not appropriately involved, the program may be ignored, criticized or resisted. Remember, the most successful risk-reduction efforts are those that involve the community in the planning and solution process.

To learn more about building support for community risk reduction, see courses offered by the National Fire Academy at <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/training/nfa/index.html>.

For archived downloads, go to:

http://www.usfa.fema.gov/training/coffee_break/