



Coffee Break Training - Fire Prevention and Public Education

Public Fire Education Planning – A Five-step Process – Step 5: Evaluate the Results of Risk-reduction Programs

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

Why evaluate the risk-reduction process? The primary goal of the evaluation is to demonstrate that risk-reduction efforts reach target populations, have the planned impact, and are demonstrably reducing loss.

Why do some organizations skip evaluations?

- Fear of working with statistics.
- Fear that a good evaluation may identify shortcomings in program efforts.
- Lack of knowledge about evaluation.

The National Fire Academy offers a six-day course on prevention measurement, “Demonstrating Your Fire Prevention Program’s Worth.”

How can evaluation prove that risk reduction works? A good evaluation process can prove that an intervention program is effective by citing objective data to validate that the goal of the intervention is being met:

- **Collect Data**
Strive to obtain a broad base of data. Some examples include root factors leading to the incident, how often incidents occur, and locations of the types of incidents.
- **Compare Data to Baseline**
If evaluation is done well and begun early, it can help provide the framework that sets up a successful risk-reduction effort. A starting point (baseline) is established and a destination (benchmark) is identified.
- **Note Interventions as Necessary**
Evaluation offers tangible proof that populations are responding to risk-reduction efforts or interventions. While a prevention activity begins almost immediately, statistical, behavioral and environmental changes usually take time.
- **Modify Interventions as Necessary**
Monitoring progress is important. Sometimes interventions need to be modified in order to meet the risk-reduction goal. That is why an evaluation plan measures performance at several levels: outcome, impact and process objectives.
- **Report Results to Sponsoring Organization and Community**
Share results of evaluation with the planning team, your fire service organization, the target population, community political leaders and decision-makers, and the community.

Summary

Make a commitment to do the evaluation well and realize that the process will take time and effort to produce tangible results. Keep an open mind and be prepared to make adjustments according to the findings of your monitoring and evaluation efforts.

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

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