



Coffee Break Training - Fire Prevention and Public Education

Levels of Prevention

No. FM-2015-3 November 12, 2015

Learning Objective: The student will be able to explain the three levels of prevention.

Researchers are always looking for new and better ways to prevent disease and injury, both to avoid human suffering and to control the tremendous economic costs of poor health. But when researchers and health experts talk about “prevention,” what do they mean?

Going upstream. Imagine that you’re standing beside a river and you see someone drowning as she floats by. You jump in and pull her ashore. A moment later, another person floats past you, and you’re not able to save even one more victim. So you decide to go upstream to see what the problem is. You find that people are falling into the river because they are stepping through a hole in a bridge. Once this is fixed, people stop falling into the water.

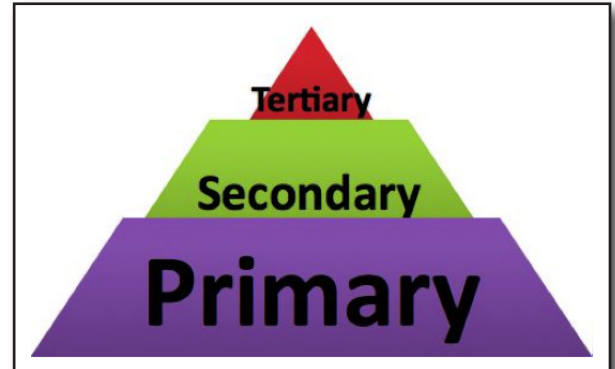
When it comes to health and safety, prevention means “going upstream” and fixing a problem instead of saving victims one by one. In general, prevention includes a wide range of activities known as “interventions” aimed at reducing risks or threats to health. These are usually grouped into three categories: primary, secondary and tertiary.

Primary prevention. Here the goal is to protect healthy people from developing a disease or experiencing an injury in the first place. For example, education about fire safety, removing fire hazards from the home or workplace, immunizations against infectious diseases, and the importance of regular exercise.

Secondary prevention. These interventions happen after an illness or serious risk factors have already been diagnosed. The goal is to halt or slow the progress. Mitigating or minimizing the event is part of secondary prevention (e.g., providing suitable modified work for injured workers; telling people to take daily, low-dose aspirin to prevent a first or second heart attack or stroke; and firefighting to minimize the destructive force of fire).

Tertiary prevention. This focuses on helping people manage complicated, long-term health problems, such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer and chronic pain. The goals include preventing further physical deterioration and maximizing quality of life (e.g., cardiac or stroke rehabilitation programs, chronic pain management programs, and patient support programs).

Consider taking a class in either the Fire Prevention: Public Education or Fire Prevention: Management curriculum to discover more about prevention and interventions. Learn more at <http://apps.usfa.fema.gov/nfacourses/>.



Levels of Prevention Model

For archived downloads, go to:

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