DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION TEAM
FOR PUYALLUP FIRE AND RESCUE

LEADING COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to determine how to develop a Community Risk Reduction Team (CRRT) within Puyallup Fire and Rescue (PFR). The problem was community risk reduction efforts in PFR were generally done on an "as time permits" basis mainly by daytime staff.

This was a descriptive research project supported by historical. The research questions were:

1. Are there members of PFR who would be interested in participating on a CRRT?

2. What factors would motivate personnel to actively participate on a CRRT?

3. What training would be necessary for the team members?

4. What risk reduction activities would the team be involved in?

The procedures involved the use of a survey to determine what importance members placed on risk reduction activities, if there were members interested in being active participants and what training they would need. The survey was sent to the 57 members of PFR, including non-uniformed members in administration, with 16 replies received. A literature review was conducted to review past and present practices. Personal communication was conducted with members of PFR to obtain background and significance information.

Only 6% of the replies indicated that CRRT was not at least important or very important. Support for the formation of a CRRT team was evidenced in that 75 % replied they would participate and 86% replied they would support this function. The primary reason given for participating or supporting a CRRT was focused on providing service to

the community. The individuals not supporting the CRRT concept stated they did not

have the time or they were not in fire prevention. Public speaking, presentation skills,

and program preparation materials were the most cited training needs. The

recommendation from this research was to find sparkplugs that would champion the

efforts of developing a CRRT.

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INTRODUCTION

Chief Dan Jones (2002) tells us to remember that educating the public about the dangers of fire and how to deal with it when it occurs remains our most valuable service. Fire safety must be emphasized for groups most at risk, children and the elderly. (p. 6)

It has been recognized that the most effective means of fire control is preventing fires from occurring. The United States Fire Administration has recognized this and has changed the curriculum of the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) offered through the National Fire Academy (NFA). *Leading Community Risk Reduction* is now a required course. (FEMA, 2003, p. 44) This course focuses on what the fire service can, and more importantly should, focus on in order to meet their mission statements of . . . protecting life and property . . . (Smoke, 1999, pp. 96-98)

The words fire prevention usually conjures up the notion of enforcement activities involving fire inspections. Thus it is typically perceived that the personnel assigned to the fire prevention bureaus of the traditionally structured fire department should do this. Community risk reduction involves more. It is an all-encompassing effort that proactively addresses potential risks that may cause injury, death or property loss to a community. The problem is that community risk reduction efforts in Puyallup Fire and Rescue (PFR) are generally done on an "as time permits" basis by mainly daytime staff.

This leads to the purpose of this research paper, which is to determine how to develop a Community Risk Reduction Team (CRRT) within PFR. The descriptive and historical research methods will be used to answer the following questions:

1. Are there members of PFR who would be interested in participating on a CRRT?

2.   What factors would motivate personnel to actively participate on a CRRT?

3.   What training would be necessary for the team members?

4.   What risk reduction functions would the team be involved in?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

USFA Administrator Paulson (2003) said "So often, communities and the media only recognized the men and women of the fire service when they respond to fires and other emergencies." Chief Paulison continues "One of the greatest accomplishments of America's fire service goes mostly unnoticed by the citizens of this nation. That accomplishment is those fires that are prevented. A fire that never starts can never harm or take lives of Americans, or firefighters" (p. 1).

Many fire department mission statements, including PFR's, include phrases similar to this: "To protect lives and save property through programs of suppression, prevention and education" (NFA, 2001, p. IG 0-4).

I spoke with Puyallup Fire Chief Merle Frank after returning from the NFA. I told him of my proposal to research the idea of implementing a CRRT composed mainly of suppression personnel and elevate it to a level similar to hazmat or special operations teams. He liked the idea and agreed that if fire prevention, specifically public safety education, was going to work that it would need to be included in the day to day operations. (M. Frank, personal communication, November 20, 2002).

Puyallup is located in Pierce County, Washington with a resident population of 35,000. The community is at risk and vulnerable to a variety of manmade and natural potentials. These range from the daily occurrences of accidents to the potential of significant impact of major disasters. Puyallup lies in an earthquake zone with the last

significant earthquake in 2001 and in the shadow of Mt. Rainier a dormant volcano.

There are over 50 freight trains per day through town that carry a variety of cargo

including hazardous materials. Puyallup is also home to the Western Washington State

Fairgrounds where over 1 million people gather yearly for entertainment. A report from

the Human Services Department (2002) reports that people over 60 years of age represent

14% of the population and projects by the year 2020 this number will be 21%. That is a

growth rate of 108% in a target group of elderly people as identified by Federal

Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as an at risk group. (pp. 12-13)

PFR is a paid department with 57 employees operating three fire stations. PFR

currently does a limited amount of public education by means of station tours, CPR

classes, school presentations, etc. The potential risks cannot be effectively addressed on

an "as time permits" basis by the few people in fire prevention and scattered efforts from

the suppression crews. A group, which is fire department driven and focusing on

community risk reduction by educating the public, would prove invaluable in times of a

major disaster and could potentially significantly reduce the day to day emergency needs

of the community.

Fire prevention or community risk is no different than any other product or idea

that you must market in order to convince the public and/or firefighters of the need for it.

Marketing fire prevention is a break in tradition, but if the fire department is truly going

to be successful in reducing the impact of hazards to the community, then it must be

willing to change. (NFA, 2001, pp. IG 4-4-5)

The suppression personnel will be better able to understand the fire prevention

organization's responsibilities and how they are carried out if the suppression

personnel are either kept informed of the activities of the organization or if they

are given the opportunity to participate in some of the activities of the

organization. Maybe a fire departments' organizational structure can be modified

to be more fire-preventative oriented (NFA, 1996, p. SM 3-22).

The organization needs to be prepared for change which may be as simple as

encouraging participation in general discussions of what needs to be changed, or to solicit

ideas from current members. Another consideration is to implement the change in small

incremental steps. (NFA, 1996, p. SM 3-27)

Fire prevention bureaus were typically initiated to design and enforce codes and

many firefighters view these as mundane tasks that they have no desire to perform. In

addition fire prevention was viewed as a refuge for some firefighters. In order to change

the perception of fire prevention, departments should not use it as a place for the sick,

lame and lazy. Fire prevention assignments need to become more appealing than in the

past. (NFA, 1996, pp. SM 3-37-38)

I questioned Firefighter Jack Jones as to the use of PFR's safety house prop I saw

him towing. He said it was purchased a couple of years ago but had not been used much

lately. He indicated it would be very useful to have training in making an effective

presentation with this tool. Training should include proper use of the house and what to

say during oral presentations. (J. Jones, personal communication, March, 2003)

PFR's Operational Guidelines (OG) (1999) requires the Deputy Fire Marshals to

perform public education activities which may include public service announcements;

presentations to schools, seniors, block watch gatherings, safety fairs, etc.; and coordinate

other educational activities. (p. 2) Another PFR OG (1999) is written that all members of

the fire department have the responsibility for ensuring their own health and safety, as well as the health and safety of others, based upon the requirements of the risk management plan and the department's safety and health program. (p. 1)

The research in this paper relates to the Terminal Objective for Unit 4 of the *Leading Community Risk Reduction* (2002) class taught at the NFA. This objective states "Given an analysis of organizational attitudes and values and a desired organizational mission, create a plan to change the organizational culture in support of community risk reduction" (NFA, 2002, p. SM 4-1). More specifically this unit embodies the building blocks of change that includes empowering members to implement community risk reduction at every level of the organization. (NFA, 2002, p. SM 4-33)

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review used in the preparation of this research project included published Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Papers, journal articles, periodicals, books and operational manuals for Puyallup Fire and Rescue. A survey and personal communications were used to gather additional information.

The concept of community risk reduction is discussed in the student manual from the NFA course *Management of Fire Prevention Programs* (2000) when it explains:

> If the fire prevention organization now can move progressively into the reduction of the overall risk to the community, not only from fire, but from other causes of injury or death, even disease, then the community will embrace and enlarge the organization through expanded programs and resources (p. SM 3-20).

In 1973 a distinguished report called America Burning was presented to President Nixon. In this report 90 recommendations were made. One of those recommendations

was, " The commission recommends that local governments make fire prevention at least equal to suppression in the planning of fire department priorities" (p. 18).

The *Management of Fire Prevention Programs*, a course presented by the NFA, reconfirms this recommendation by citing *America Burning Revisited*. It called for enhanced efforts in fire prevention including expanded fire safety education programs to better reach young people and adults, plus fire problem awareness programs targeted at elected officials of the community. (NFA, 1996, p. SM 3-20)

Although fire deaths in the U.S. have dropped over the last two decades, there are still over 4000 people killed each year by fire in the U.S. This indicates that the fire service still has work to do in the field of fire prevention. (NFA, 2002, p. SM 2-31)

Public fire education should not be limited to visits to the elementary schools once or twice a year. Public fire safety education should focus on all aspects of the community on a regular basis. Programs need to be designed to address senior citizens, industrial complexes, young people, handicapped, etc. (NFA, 1996, pp. SM 3- 65-66) This meets the objectives of the United States Fire Administration (USFA) as outlined by Chief Operating Officer Ken Burris (2001) in the new five-year operational plan. The objectives are:

- Reduce by 25% the loss of life of the age group 14 years and below.

- Reduce by 25% the loss of life of the age group 65 years and above.

- Reduce by 25% the loss of firefighters' lives.

- Provide 2,500 communities with a comprehensive multi-hazard risk reduction plan led by or including the local fire service.

- Respond appropriately in a timely manner to emergent issues.

This was to be done by serving as a catalyst for a renewed and focused effort on prevention and education (p. 21).

The elderly population in the United States will increase dramatically in the near future. The Baby Boom generation is aging and is projected to increase the number of citizens over 65 years of age from 12.5 % to 20% within the next 10-20 years. (FEMA, 1999, p. 7)

Attorney Gordon Graham (1999) states "As we approach the 21st century, and look at all of the external issues facing fire department operations, we must get away from post incident correction and move into pre incident prevention, the expertise of Risk Managers." He further explains that this is easily noted by comparing how many personnel are assigned to suppression and how many are assigned to prevention (p. 1).

Graham's Rules for the Elimination of Civil Liability, referred to as GRECL #5, says "A well informed, well educated public is the fire service's absolute best ally" (p. 24) and GRECL #14 clearly states "Prevention is better than correction" (p. 27).

Fire protection tools include emergency response (fire suppression), enforcement (fire codes and fire-safe engineering), fire safety education and the potential use of economic incentives. These tools may influence the use of fire protective measures. The ultimate effect of greater prevention efforts is the reduction of risk. (NFA, 2002, p. SM 2-34-36)

New or changed programs often fail because the right people are not involved, stakeholders are not identified, adequate resources are not available or planners do not have the authority to proceed. Therefore, it is desirable to establish a small group, three

or four, of key individuals who will help influence others and help the guide the process from day-to-day. (NFA, 2002, p. SM 2-40)

The mission statements in the fire service must include something addressing preventing harm. The executive fire officer must be personally committed to the philosophy of prevention in order to strive for a safe and vital community. Change begins with a vision for the future and one person making a commitment to make change a reality. (NFA, 2002, p. SM 2-28)

What better way to safeguard the community than by taking a lead in a community-wide risk reduction program. Traits of leaders are self discipline, strong personal and professional values, physical, emotional and psychological wellness and the ability to sell yourself and the vision for the future. Leaders in community risk reduction must be active participants in the political system of the community. (NFA, 2002, p. SM 2-43-43)

Organizational cultures that predict success in community risk reduction include:

- A positive attitude about community risk reduction and prevention in general.

- Belief that community risk reduction is a valid and important mission of the organization.

- A system of reward for participation in, and support of, community risk reduction programs.

- Existence of community risk reduction as a core program of the organization.

- Belief that prevention is the most effective method for preventing human loss and property from fire.

The policies and structures most commonly found in successful organizations include:

- Job descriptions that specifically include community risk reduction task and responsibilities.
- Requirements for training in community risk reduction philosophy and methods, especially at the entry level for firefighters.
- Positions that are dedicated to community risk reduction.
- A separate division or program area dedicated to risk reduction, which includes a budget.
- Promotional considerations for active participants.
- A chief officer assigned to the risk reduction mission (NFA, 2002, p. SM 4-29-30).

The fire service needs to move its fixation from post-event activities (after the fire has started) to pre-event (before the fire starts). Ultimately, this is going to save the greatest number of lives and property for the least money and with lowest risk of failure. The major problems like fire will not disappear overnight so the need for large suppression forces will remain for sometime. (NFA, 2001, p. SM 4-6)

FEMA's Project Impact lists four steps that CRRT members could be directly involved in:

1. Build community partnerships.
2. Assess risks.
3. Prioritize needs.
4. Continue community support and actions (NFA, 2001, pp. IG 3-7-9).

Fire prevention is becoming a stronger political issue with politicians and public officials using fire prevention issues to strengthen their political positions. In addition, a better educated public forces public officials and agencies to answer for their action or inactions. (NFA, 1996, p. SM 6-3)

Some of the groups that influence your community are

- People who live in the community.

- People who work in the community, but live elsewhere.

- People who visit the community.

- People from neighboring communities.

- State/Federal officials.

- News media.

- Special interest groups, e.g. ethic groups, women, etc.

- Businesses both inside and outside the community (NFA, 1996, p. SM 6-19).

The NFA's course *Fire Service Financial Management* (1988) stresses that good community relations are vital to being able to conduct an effective public education program. Generating a positive public image requires:

- Training all personnel to be good public representatives of the department.

- Making sure everything visible to the public creates a positive image.

- Expanding goodwill activities whenever possible.

- Encouraging active community involvement in the department. (pp. 6- 4-5)

Training would be needed in how to assess your audience and determine what persuasive tactics to use to assure that your message comes across. These tactics may include positive approaches such as personal appeals, logical appeals and emotional

appeals. (NFA, 1988, p. 6-4) Training should include public speaking and media

relations which is used widely for press conferences, interviews, public service

announcements and other oral presentations. (NFA, 1996, p. SM 6-14-15)

The NFA offers several excellent courses for enhancing skills in order for

personnel to become a champion for and educator in public fire education and prevention.

Courses include:

- Leading Community Risk Reduction

- Strategic Analysis of Community Risk Reduction

- Presenting Effective Public Education Programs

- Discovering the Road to High Risk Audiences

- Community Education Leadership

- Developing Fire and Life Safety Strategies

- Fire Prevention for First Responders and Small Departments

- Marketing Fire Prevention in Your Community

- Presenting Effective Education Programs

- Prevention Mitigation for Small Departments

- Self-Study Course for Community Safety Educators (FEMA, 2003, pp. 44-59)

Elderly citizens and other individual with disabilities such as blindness, deafness

or mobility impaired have special needs and firefighters should be trained on how to

instruct these groups to react during emergency situations. It is important to remember

that basic fire safety tips still apply but that these individuals may have difficulty

performing them. It is equally important to remember that while these firefighters teach

safety tips to focus groups, the firefighters are gaining invaluable knowledge about the

citizens and facilities in the event they respond to an actual emergency at these locations.
(FEMA, 1999, p. 19)

Dan Porth (1996) of Portland Fire Bureau emphasizes that any successful
program requires a commitment of resources to do the job properly and completely. This
includes a team of people with the essential skills to be formed at the start of the process.
The process he talks about includes the steps of identification, analysis, design,
implementation and evaluation. He further professes that a good mission statement
serves as a reference point from which all work should extend. (pp. 16-17)

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services, Graham Meldrum (1999)
professes that the future in the fire service is the conviction that fire prevention, through
community fire safety education, is the most effective way of protecting the public. (p. 9)

Ian Evans (1999), head of the National Community Fire Safety Centre in England,
indicates that resources should be created for brigades so that they may plan community
fire safety initiatives thus making better use of their resources. (p. 13)

Nancy Rigg (1999) writes that prevention is all too often overlooked or
underdeveloped. She indicates that fewer victims and rescuers will lose their lives or
face serious injury if more life-threatening incidents can be prevented. Items that can be
addressed are:

- How to protect yourself at home, at work, at schools and in your car.

- What supplies will be needed and where to store them.

- How to contact family members and friends when disaster strikes. (p. 10)

Contrary to what they believe, civilians are at the greatest risk of dying in a fire
when they are at home, especially when they are sleeping. Civilians statistically are

much safer when they are at work, shopping, or being educated in a nonresidential

building designed according to building codes. (Gustin, 1996, p. 46)

Statistics show that over 75% of structure fires occur in residential structures and

that is where the highest injury and fatality rate is for both civilians and firefighters. So

why is public fire safety education a low priority? A survey done in the Arlington, VA

Fire Department revealed that firefighters did not understand the importance of fire safety

education, felt there was inadequate training to make presentations and not enough lead

time to prepare. A curriculum was set up to address these needs. Specifics included

demonstrating that fire safety education was part of the fire departments mission, why

proactive approaches are more beneficial in human terms and cost, and then instruction

on how to deliver presentations to various audiences. This curriculum included student

activities in each section such as making a lesson plan. (Darrow, 1989, pp. 24-27)

The elderly population has the highest risk of dying in a residential fire. As the

elderly population swells a corresponding increase in fire deaths among older adults is

likely. The fire safety community must address the fire safety needs of older adults or be

faced with the potential for a severe public health problem. (Burris, 2001, p. 25)

In his article about the catastrophic fires of 2001, Robert McCarthy (2002)

concludes that of the 22 catastrophic residential fires, where the cause could be

determined, the cause involved a failure to practice sound fire prevention principles.

These principles were failure to install and maintain smoke detectors, failure to install

them on every floor, and failure to implement and practice escape plans. (p. 81)

Louisville Fire Chief Russell Sanders (1989) says the time has come to stop being

reactive as in suppression and focus on proactive items like fire prevention and public

education. He goes on to point out that the majority of our resources (manning) are in suppression so if the fire service is going to make a difference in death and injury from fire, it is going to have to come from suppression. Fire prevention and public education are the primary responsibility of every member not just those assigned to prevention bureaus. Chief Sanders plan to change included:

- All future recruit classes would include extensive training in fire prevention and public education.

- Every member promoted, regardless of rank, would serve a period in the fire prevention bureau.

- Statewide efforts would be made to include fire safety curriculums in school. (p. 39)

Preventing fires, injuries and disease is the most effective way of preventing harm. In the future, public education and prevention will be of equal importance to fire suppression in the role of the fire service in the community. This will include educational programs designed to change behavior, codes and standards to mitigate risks, and analysis of incidents to determine more effective methods for preventing fires and injuries. (FEMA, 1998, pp. 7-12)

The fire service, and more importantly individual firefighters, must be willing to look honestly and deeply into the work they love. In all honestly they may not be providing the results that will truly make a difference in the loss of life and injury due to fire. It is critical that we become change agents. (FEMA, 1998, p. 36)

In order to provide the best possible public education effort in the most cost-effective manner, we need to be able to define the real problems in the community. This

effort starts with good data. Fire departments must utilize and report accurate data to the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). (FEMA, 1998, p. 38)

The toughest task in prevention activities is winning the support of department members. Take the time to listen and consider their program recommendations and then recruit assistance. Community education is a department activity. The fire departments with the most successful community education programs all share one common strategy: every person on the department is a public educator. (FEMA, 2002, pp.8-9)

Sheldon Hamblin (1997), a student at NFA enrolled in the EFOP made recommendations for his department while researching risk reduction options. His recommendations include that the department make a commitment to public education, contact the union representatives for planning help, find personnel that are interested and don't reinvent the wheel. This meant that there are a lot of canned classes out there that can be implemented with minimum effort. (p. 2)

Richard Carlson (1994) an EFOP student from Okolona Fire Protection District reports that the survey he conducted revealed that 85% of EFOP students saw the fire service becoming more involved in community risk reduction programs. (p. 2)

Gary McCarraher (1995) identified four crucial elements for a community risk reduction program. They are a quality training program for participants, motivated personnel, support from administration and clearly defined objectives for the program. (p. 2)

Joseph Silvati (1989) writes in his EFO project that he recommended his department develop and implement new fire prevention programs, with it being a top priority for the Fire Safety Educator. All incidents cannot be prevented, but many can be

reduced by properly educating the citizens we serve. This is the essence of community

risk reduction. (pp. 2-3)

Community risk management efforts aggressively seek to engage citizens,

businesses and others in the active management of many public risks. Citizen advisory

groups, public education and dialog forums, and other safety initiative can serve multiple

purposes. These may include addressing the risks, and developing community support

for risk management efforts. (Young, 2000, p. 9)

Three important factors must be considered when estimating life risks. They are:

1) The number of people at risk, 2) the degree of risk and 3) the occupant's ability to

provide for their own safety. (Strickland, 1987, p. 37)

The degree to which citizens themselves become involved have a significant

impact upon the quality of a community's fire protection system. Public fire education

programs have increased the preparedness of adults and children to protect themselves

and to rapidly call the fire department for assistance. (Risdon, 1989, pp. 31-38)

There are four steps to implementing transformational leadership. They are:

- Getting the employees to recognize the need for change.

- Creating a new vision for the future.

- Changing to a new vision.

- Institutionalizing the new change. (Connealy, 2003, p.p. 41-42)

A viable organization provides an opportunity to demonstrate leadership and

professional growth for all those involved as Public Fire Educators. (Steiner, 2002, p. 2)

Bernard Mack (1996) indicates that when he reviewed the Mission Statement for the Philadelphia Fire department attempting to find out where they missed the mark he found two objectives that stood out:

1. To reduce the loss of life and damage to property from fire by applying proactive inspections and code enforcement.

2. To aggressively establish a comprehensive fire safety program designed to meet the diversified needs of the entire community.

Through the use of a survey he found that more than 82% of the residents would accept a home safety check if one was offered. (p. 42)

The training firefighters receive and the experiences they possess enable them to recognize and explain the menace of fire better than anyone else in the community. Firefighters and members of the public can benefit from increased contacts with one another. Firefighters still occupy a unique position of respect within their communities. (Chubb, 1995, pp. 28-35)

The rewards for saving lives by preventing fires rather than fighting them usually are intangible and for many may seem unfulfilling. Fire prevention is the responsibility of all members of the fire service. Company officers are expected to understand the importance of fire inspection, public awareness, and public education programs and to know how to implement them in the community. When we fail to engage everyone in the mission of preventing fire losses, injuries and deaths, we are missing opportunities to improve productivity and prevent suffering. (Chubb, 1995, p. 34)

Guidelines for a successful company-level fire prevention program include:

- Set reasonable goals and establish meaningful priorities.

- Encourage company-level fire prevention efforts by avoiding stereotypical fire prevention efforts.

- Don't overlook the value of fire prevention to the fire department.

- Direct training and resources to support the program.

- Make fire prevention an integral part of each firefighters training and responsibilities (Chubb, 1995, p. 34-35).

Firefighters must understand that real public education means more than giving out pamphlets, showing children a nozzle pattern, and installing moke detectors. They need to commit to making a fire safe community. (Shouldis, 2003, p.1-2)

The Five-Year Plan Update (1999-2003) for PFR includes the mission statement that identifies public safety education, public relations and public information as our responsibility. A list of short-term goals and objectives includes:

- Establish a civilian Public Safety Educator position, and add an additional Deputy fire Marshal.

- Form a school fire safety task force.

Recommendations in the plan include:

- Carefully selected citizens (perhaps teachers or retired teachers) should be recruited to conduct additional public safety education programs to specific audiences—as a pro-bono service—to augment department efforts.

- The pre-planning program Tactical Information for Perilous Situations (TIPS) should be continued.

- A group should be formed to plan, coordinate, and initiate a continuing safety education program using the public broadcast television channel (pp. 1-11).

The *Standard for Firefighters Professional Qualifications* can be found in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1001. Section 3-5 reads, "Prevention, Preparedness, and Maintenance. This duty involves performing activities that reduce the loss of life and property due to fire through hazard identification, inspection, education, and response readiness, according to the following job performance requirements." Specifics are included in section 3-5.1 that require firefighters to perform a fire safety check in a private dwelling and section 3-5.2 that requires them to present safety information to station visitors or small groups. Section 4-5.1 requires they know how to prepare a preincident survey. (NFPA, 1997, pp. 1001-9-11)

NFPA 1021 is a similar document addressing fire officer qualifications with section 2-1 requiring fire officers to meet NFPA 1001 standards plus additional items. One such additional item is in section 3-3 requiring delivery of life safety, injury and fire prevention education programs. (NFPA, 1997, pp. 1021-5-8)

NFPA 1035 lists general requisite knowledge needs to be a Public Fire and Life Safety Educator as:

Fire behavior; organizational structure, function, and operation; human behavior during fire; injury causes/prevention; escape planning; hazard identification and correction; basic fire protection systems and devices; emergency reporting; firefighter personal protective equipment; special needs for those with disabilities; time management. (NFPA, 2000, p. 1035-7)

NFPA 1201 (2000) is the *Standard for Developing Fire Protection Services* for the Public. Chapter 2 section 2-1 addresses the fire departments requirements to have

programs, procedures and organizations for preventing fire in the community and
minimizing damage should a fire occur. (p. 1201-5)

PROCEDURES

The intent of this research is to determine what is needed to develop a CRRT for
the City of Puyallup.

The research for this EFOP ARP began while I was attending the *Leading
Community Risk Reduction* course at the NFA in Emmitsburg, MD in October 2002.
Material was reviewed at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) located on the campus of
the NFA. After returning home, I used e-mail to contact the LRC and requested them to
send information from journals, books and periodicals that pertained to public education
focusing on the use of fire department employees. I received eight items from them. In
addition, I accessed the LRC via the Internet and reviewed numerous abstracts that were
on file that pertained to fire service public education activities. I was able to download
applicable research papers directly from the website. I accessed the Washington State
website and from there I was able to link to items such as the Revised Code of
Washington and the Washington State Statutes. The Internet also provided information
from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website and the USFA links
provided from there.

The next step was to review journals, books and periodicals that were available
locally. Additional items researched include the operational manuals utilized by PFR.

A survey was used to gather pertinent information from the members of PFR. It
was important that information and ideas be gathered from the individuals that would

possibly be members or supporters of the CRRT for PFR and from those opposed. The

surveys were sent to the employees of PFR which include:

- Administrative Chief Officers – 4

- Deputy Fire Marshals – 2

- Administrative non-uniformed staff – 3

- Suppression line personnel – 48

Surveys with an accompanying cover letter (see Appendix for a copy of the letter

and survey) were sent out to the 57 personnel mentioned above and 15 were returned.

This represents a return rate of 26.3%. The individual survey responses were to remain

anonymous. Individuals asked to complete the survey were given the opportunity to

request a copy of the results by contacting the author personally.

Background and significance information was obtained by personal

communication with the individuals cited in this ARP. In addition, the author of this

paper has been in the fire service for 25 years. The author served the first 24 years with

the City of Idaho Falls Fire Department in Idaho Falls, Idaho retiring in 2002 at the rank

of Division Chief. He is currently employed with PFR since June of 2002. During his

career the author has attended numerous courses, both locally and nationally, relating to

public education, fire prevention management and community risk reduction. As a local,

state and NFA instructor, the author has presented public education concepts at various

locals. These educational opportunities as a student and teacher have provided insight

into the attitudes toward, need for and effectiveness of community risk reduction.

Limitations

        The author has been employed by PFR for less than one year thus limiting individual insight into the past community risk reduction and/or fire prevention practices of PFR.

        A number of surveys were returned with minimal responses which may be indicative of the unfamiliarity with the term Community Risk Reduction. Survey questions 5-11 were intentionally presented as open-ended in order to allow the respondents complete freedom in expressing their answers without being limited to a predetermined list of answers. Respondents were also not limited to a single answer in questions 1-4 and 7. This did provide a challenge when compiling the data, as not everyone stated the exact same words and phrases.

Definition of Terms

Champion: An ardent defender or supporter of a cause; to fight for, defend or support as a champion (Costello, 1993, p. 233).

Community Risk: This is a product of community hazards and the vulnerability to the community from the hazards (NFA, 2002, p. SM 2-32).

Lahar: A landslide or mudflow of volcanic fragments on the flank of a volcano (Costello, 1993, p. 759).

Risk: The measure of probability and severity of adverse effects that result from exposure to a hazard (NFPA 1250, 2000, p. 1250-4).

Vulnerability: The systems in the community that are affected by the hazardous event (NFA, 2002, p. SM 2-32).

RESULTS

The author used survey questions 1-4 to gain historical insight into the perceptions of the employee group as to what is taking place now in the area of community risk reduction.

Survey question one was used to evaluate the perception of the PFR members as to which organizational group of PFR employees was currently doing the community risk reduction activities. Responses were: administration (6), fire prevention (6), suppression (1) and no activities being done (5).

Comments from this question included:

- I have only heard about the Lahar sirens.

- Need more manpower.

- Public education is one of the most effective ways to provide real reduction.

- We all provide information when and where we can.

- Administration is doing a little.

Determining the importance PFR members gave community risk reduction efforts was tabulated in survey question two. The responses were: very important (6), important (8), minimally important (1), and not important at all (0).

 Survey questions three was used to allow the members to rate the effectiveness of the current community risk reduction activities. The results as reported: very effective (0), effective (3), minimally effective (8) and not effective at all (3). Comments for this question were:

- Need a Fire Marshal and Inspector.

- Only a real emergency can dictate our effectiveness. However in prevention the amount of commercial fire loss has diminished since I came here 10 years ago.

Survey question 4 asked for the member's opinions on which segment of the organization should be responsible for doing community risk reduction activities. The respondents answered: administration (5), fire prevention (7), suppression (3), all employees (8), others (2).

Comments included:

- Depends on the specific activity.

- Crime prevention provides more than just that. Public education.

- Emergency management staff. We have none!

- Community should be involved as well.

Research Question 1. Are there members of PFR who would be interested in participating on a CRRT?

The first part of survey question five was used to determine if there were members who would participate as team members. There was significant indication of potential participation as 73% (11 of 15) of the responders indicated they would be active members if a team were developed.

Survey question seven was used to determine whom department members thought should comprise the CRRT. The respondents reported:

- Administration   10

- Fire Prevention   10

- Suppression   9

- Combination   6

- Other   7

Other was listed as law enforcement, city planning and engineering, business owners, insurance companies, community services, and emergency management.

Survey question six was used to determine if personnel would support the formation of a CRRT. Of the surveys returned 80% (12 of 15) replied that they would support the team.

Research Question 2. What factors would motivate personnel to actively participate on a CRRT?

The second part of survey question 5 asked for why personnel would or would not participate. Comments from the ones who marked yes were:

- Depends on the program and whether it was effective or just window dressing.

- Responsibility for our citizens.

- I believe it is responsible to take a proactive stance.

- That is what I have been assigned to.

- Time.

- To educate the public.

- Assisting the public.

- Informed citizens reduce confusion and mitigation – Just cause I want to!

- It is part of the role of the fire service.

- The need.

- Knowing that administration is actively pursuing would motivate.

The comments from those who marked no are:

- I'm not in fire prevention & planning.

- Too much workload now.

- This should be a full-time employee. I do not have the time to give in my workday.

- No time, our department has higher priority items not being done now.

The second part of question six asked if they would support a CRRT. The yes comments were:

- Major disaster would overwhelm local FD resources. A group of trained helpers would be valuable.

- Responsibility for our citizens.

- The best disasters are the ones that are prevented.

- For safety for everyone.

- If it was supported and funded properly.

- PR service to community.

- Knowing it is a community risk reduction that is important to our community.

- Only if it is made a priority. It would need time, resources and support.

- It is part of the role of the fire service.

- The need.

- Prevention is better than loss.

The no comments were:

- Put more resources in prevention.

- No time, our department has higher priority items not being done now.

Research Question 3. What training would be necessary for the team members?

Survey question eight was used to evaluate the perceived training requirements in order to be an effective CRRT member. The respondents answers are:

- Don't know. Haven't seen duties and responsibilities.

- Disaster training, WMD, fire education.

- Public education as well as risk awareness level training for the employee.

- Unknown (2).

- Public speaking (3).

- Presentation development (2).

- Education theories and practices, i.e. Instructor I.

- Orientation to various programs, resources and training materials.

- To be an instructor, educating the community.

- Plan knowledge, logistics, resources, in services.

- All.

- Public education training.

- Goals and objectives must be established first, then training and orientation.

- Then pub ed developed and delivered.

Research Question 4. What risk reduction functions would the team be involved in?

Survey question nine asked for ideas to facilitate the evaluation of the job functions of a CRRT. The reported answers are:

- Community meetings.

- Any activity that might require a multi-agency response.

- Any high-risk situation identified by leadership.

- Unknown (2).

- Fire prevention and safety in the schools.

- First aid, CPR, AED (public access), fire prevention and education, schools, businesses, child safety.

- Coordinate meeting locations, times, speaker.

- Public education.

- Develop plans for various types of emergencies and disseminate for preparedness.

- ?

- Education and planning.

- Public presentations, education, plan development.

- Determine areas of risk and communicate to public.

Question ten sought information regarding the activities the CRRT should coordinate. The responses were:

- ? (2).

- Any activities that might require a multi-agency response.

- Unknown.

- Not sure.

- Logistical and resource.

- Info booths.

- Block Watch presentations, school public education, and business public education.

Survey question 11 was used as an open ended input avenue because the author believes the concept of community risk reduction may be perceived as being synonymous with fire prevention code enforcement activities. Comments received are listed below.

- Suppression kept in the dark on disaster planning. Supposedly there are some but we're not in the loop.

- Traditional mindsets as to where the responsibility lies will be a big challenge to overcome.

- Our fire safety program is very weak and has great room for improvement, specifically within the schools.

- Based on your description, I believe the Emergency Management Division, in conjunction with Pierce County, already does CRRT.

- When one is prepared – chaos can take the back seat, thus leaving emergency responders more apt to handle priority incident, without dealing with the lost and confused.

- Public education specialists are currently being used for this type of program by many departments in this area.

- Public education is important. We have said this for years. No funding, nor personnel have ever been assigned.

DISCUSSION

Some community risk reduction activities are being currently being conducted by PFR as is indicated by the research done with this project (Appendix). This research is being done to determine how to develop a CRRT within PFR. The findings of this ARP

will be useful in determining team makeup, recruiting team members, determining the focus of a CRRT efforts, and planning for training needs.

Most fire department mission statements, including PFR's, are similar to this: "To protect lives and save property through programs of suppression, prevention and education" (NFA, 2001, p. IG 0-4).

The fire service in the United States must begin working with people and organizations outside of the fire service and make honest attempts at educating them about fire and its results. Currently departments continue to spend a lot of money and time on suppression-related activities. Fire prevention or community risk is no different than any other product or idea that you must market in order to convince the public or firefighters of the need for it. Marketing fire prevention is a break in tradition, but if the fire department is truly going to be successful in reducing the impact of hazards to the community, then it must be willing to change. (NFA, 2001, pp. IG 4-4-5)

Fire prevention activities have been a part of the fire service for many years. PFR activities are similar to the typical fire department as indicated in this research in that the majority of risk reduction items currently performed by PFR are plan reviews and inspections. Other fire prevention efforts may include station tours, Fire Prevention Week activities, and a myriad of other similar public informational or educational programs. (NFA, 1996, pp. SM 3-37-38)

Many firefighters, especially those that have never worked in fire prevention, view these as boring tasks with little satisfaction. It is our challenge to change this perception to a more appealing one. The responses to survey questions two, five and six indicate that the majority (80%) of the respondents feels that community risk reduction

efforts are at least important and they would actively participate or support a CRRT. The author believes this to be the case by observing the actions of PFR employees over the last year. The author has witnessed public education presentations at fairs, schools, fire stations and chance encounters. PFR currently does not document the numbers of presentations or contacts made during community risk reduction activities. (A. Beckerman, personal communication, April 9, 2003).

Suppression personnel will be better able to understand the fire prevention organization's responsibilities and how they are carried out if the suppression personnel are either kept informed of the activities of the organization, or if they are given the opportunity to participate in some of the activities of the organization. Maybe a fire departments' organizational structure can be modified to be more fire-preventative oriented. (NFA, 1996, p. SM 3-22)

Motivating factors were requested in survey questions 5-6. These are summarized as the belief that it is a fire departments responsibility to educate the citzens in safety issues. Lack of available time was reported as the major deterrent to getting involved. This is due to the ever increasing tasks that fire departments are being asked to perform or in many cases offering to do. These tasks include EMS, HazMat, and multiple specialty rescue teams. All this adds up to more emergency and non-emergency requests for services which reduces the time available to do one of the most vital and effective mission statement functions, public safety education.

New or changed programs often fail because the right people are not involved, stakeholders are not identified, adequate resources are not available or planners do not have the authority to proceed. Therefore, it is desirable to establish a small group, three

to four, of key individuals who will help influence others and help the guide the process from day-to-day. (NFA, 2002, p. SM 2-40) The fire departments with the most successful community education programs all share one common strategy: every person on the department is a public educator. (FEMA, 2002, pp.8-9)

The primary motivating factor that should be stressed is life safety for everyone. Nancy Rigg (1999) writes that prevention is all too often overlooked or underdeveloped. She indicates that fewer victims and rescuers will lose their lives or face serious injury if more life-threatening incidents can be prevented. (p. 10) Although fire deaths in the U.S. have dropped over the last two decades, there are still over 4000 people killed each year by fire in the U.S. This indicates that the fire service still has work to do in the field of fire prevention. (NFA, 2002, p. SM 2-31)

Organizationally, a key motivator is that the executive fire officer must be personally committed to the philosophy of prevention in order to strive for a safe and vital community. Change begins with a vision for the future and one person making a commitment to make change a reality. (NFA, 2002, p. SM 2-28)

Organizational cultures that predict success in community risk reduction include:

- A positive attitude about community risk reduction and prevention in general.

- Belief that community risk reduction is a valid and important mission of the organization.

- A system of reward for participation in, and support of, community risk reduction programs.

- Existence of community risk reduction as a core program of the organization.

- Belief that prevention is the most effective method for preventing human loss and property from fire.

The policies and structures most commonly found in successful organizations include:

- Job descriptions that specifically include community risk reduction task and responsibilities.

- Requirements for training in community risk reduction philosophy and methods, especially at the entry level for firefighters.

- Positions that are dedicated to community risk reduction.

- A separate division or program area dedicated to risk reduction, which includes a budget.

- Promotional considerations for active participants.

- A chief officer assigned to the risk reduction mission. (NFA, 2002, p. SM 4-29-30)

The results of survey question eight indicate that PFR employees believe additional training is necessary so that they could be more effective. Training should include public speaking and media relations which is used widely for press conferences, interviews, public service announcements and other oral presentations. (NFA, 1996, p. SM 6-14-15) Training that may be needed to be effective is how to assess your audience and determine what persuasive tactics to use to assure that your message comes across. These tactics may include positive approaches such as personal appeals, logical appeals and emotional appeals. (NFA, 1988, p. 6-4)

The NFA offers several excellent courses for enhancing skills in order for personnel to become a champion for and educator in public fire education and prevention. Courses include:

- Leading Community Risk Reduction

- Strategic Analysis of Community Risk Reduction

- Presenting Effective Public Education Programs

- Discovering the Road to High Risk Audiences

- Community Education Leadership

- Developing Fire and Life Safety Strategies

- Fire Prevention for First Responders and Small Departments

- Marketing Fire Prevention in Your Community

- Presenting Effective Education Programs

- Prevention Mitigation for Small Departments

- Self-Study Course for Community Safety Educators (FEMA, 2003, pp. 44-59)

The elderly population has the highest risk of dying in a residential fire. As the elderly population swells a corresponding increase in fire deaths among older adults is likely. The fire safety community must address the fire safety needs of older adults or be faced with the potential for a severe public health problem. (Burris, 2001, p. 25)

The elderly population in the U.S. will increase dramatically in the near future. The aging Baby Boom generation is projected to increase the number of citizens over 65 years of age from 12.5 % to 20% within the next 10-20 years. (FEMA, 1999, p. 7)

Elderly citizens and other individual with disabilities such as blindness, deafness or mobility impaired have special needs and firefighters should be trained on how to

instruct these groups to react during emergency situations. It is important to remember

that basic fire safety tips still apply but that these individuals may have difficulty

performing them. It is equally important to remember that while these firefighters teach

safety tips to focus groups, the firefighters are gaining invaluable knowledge about the

citizens and facilities in the event they respond to an actual emergency at these locations.

(FEMA, 1999, p. 19)

A survey done in the Arlington, VA Fire Department revealed that firefighters did

not understand the importance of fire safety education, felt there was inadequate training

to make presentations and not enough lead time to prepare. A curriculum was set up to

address these needs. Specifics included demonstrating that fire safety education was part

of the fire departments mission, why proactive approaches are more beneficial in human

terms and cost, and then instruction on how to deliver presentations to various audiences.

This curriculum included student activities in each section such as making a lesson plan.

(Darrow, 1989, pp. 24-27)

NFPA 1035 lists general requisite knowledge needs to be a Public Fire and Life

Safety Educator as:

> Fire behavior; organizational structure, function, and operation; human behavior
>
> during fire; injury causes/prevention; escape planning; hazard identification and
>
> correction; basic fire protection systems and devices; emergency reporting;
>
> firefighter personal protective equipment; special needs for those with disabilities;
>
> time management. (NFPA, 2000, p. 1035-7)

Public fire safety education should focus on all aspects of the community on a

regular basis. Programs need to be designed to address senior citizens, industrial

complexes, young people, handicapped, etc. (NFA, 1996, pp. SM 3- 65-66). This

meets the objectives of the United States Fire Administration as outlined by Ken

Burris (2001) in the new five-year operational plan. The objectives are:

- Reduce by 25% the loss of life of the age group 14 years and below.

- Reduce by 25% the loss of life of the age group 65 years and above.

- Reduce by 25% the loss of firefighters' lives.

- Provide 2,500 communities with a comprehensive multi-hazard risk reduction

  plan led by or including the local fire service.

- Respond appropriately in a timely manner to emergent issues.

This was to be done by serving as a catalyst for a renewed and focused effort on

prevention and education (p. 21).

FEMA's Project Impact lists four steps CRRT members could be directly

involved in:

1. Build community partnerships.

5. Assess risks.

6. Prioritize needs.

7. Continue community support and actions (NFA, 2001, pp. IG 3-7-9).

Sheldon Hamblin (1997) reminds us not to reinvent the wheel. There are a lot of

canned public education classes out there just waiting to be presented. (p. 2)

The 22 catastrophic residential fires of 2001, where the cause could be

determined, involved a failure to practice sound fire prevention principles. These

principles were failure to install and maintain smoke detectors, failure to install them on

every floor, and failure to implement and practice escape plans. (McCarthy, 2002, p. 81)

A survey conducted in the Philadelphia area found that 82% of the residents would accept a home fire safety check if one was offered. (Mack, 1996, p.42)

Fire prevention is becoming a stronger political issue with politicians and public officials using fire prevention issues to strengthen their political positions. In addition, a better educated public forces public officials and agencies to answer for their action or inaction. (NFA, 1996, p. SM 6-3)

PFR's (1999) Five-Year Plan Update includes the formation of a school fire safety task force, the use of outside public safety educators, continued use of the TIPS program and coordination of a public safety education plan. (pp.1-11)

Fire prevention activities focusing on community safety education is the key to reducing the risk to our communities and firefighters. The review of other's information indicates that the use of suppression personnel is paramount in order to have a successful program. The survey results specifically indicate that there is a significant portion of PFR firefighters that would either participate or support a CRRT if they received the proper training and tools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Research has shown that there is an interest within the Puyallup Fire Department to conduct community risk reduction efforts. Most importantly, it has shown that there is a significant need for continued efforts towards the reduction of deaths due to fire in the United States. The author recommends four steps in developing a CRRT within PFR.

1. Start documenting current community risk reduction activities to provide future statistical data.

2. Find sparkplugs from each of the divisions within PFR that would we willing to champion the cause of community risk reduction.

3. This work group would then review information provided in this EFOP and any other relevant materials, paying particular attention to department structure and community needs in order to formulate an action plan. The plan should define minimum training requirements, specify initial target educational programs and establish budget needs.

4. The champions should present their plan of action to fire administrators, elected city officials and the labor group focusing on the benefits of such a program and request their support.

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APPENDIX

March 1, 2003

Dear Puyallup Fire and Rescue employee,

The National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program is designed to provide continuing educational opportunities specific to fire department senior officers or others in key leadership roles. I am completing my 3rd course of the 4-course curriculum with my final class scheduled for June 2003. Each class requires an extensive research paper to be satisfactorily completed within 6 months of attendance and prior to attending the next class.

I am currently researching information regarding the potential development of a Community Risk Reduction Team (CRRT) for Puyallup Fire and Rescue. For the purpose of this paper, Community Risk Reduction will be defined as a broad spectrum of preventative and mitigation activities conducted prior to or during actual emergency events. Examples maybe include anything from disaster planning to developing and/or delivering public education programs. Community Risk Reduction is not simply routine inspections and plan reviews. The concept of using specially trained teams has been used by the fire service for many years as evidenced by the formation of such teams as HazMat, specialized rescues, etc. The results of this survey will be used in determining if there is an interest in a CRRT, what training would be necessary and what functions would such a team be responsible to perform.

The completed research project will be referenced in the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy. Other members of the fire service may use this report while researching this topic further. The individual responses will remain anonymous but you may request a copy of the results by contacting me.

I respectfully request your assistance by completing and returning the attached survey no later than March 20, 2003. I am appreciative of your time and effort in helping me with this project.

Sincerely,

Kelvin Johnson
Deputy Chief
Puyallup Fire and Rescue

APPENDIX (cont.)

Community Risk Reduction Course Survey
November 2002

1. Who is currently doing the majority of Community Risk Reduction (CRR) activities for Puyallup Fire and Rescue?
   Administration_____
   Fire Prevention_____
   Suppression_____
   No activities are currently being done_____

2. How would you rate the importance of CRR activities?
   Very important_____
   Important_____
   Minimally important_____
   Not important at all_____

3. How would you rate the effectiveness of the current CRR activities?
   Very effective_____
   Effective_____
   Minimally effective_____
   Not effective at all_____

4. Who or what area of PFR should be responsible for performing CRR activities?
   Administration_____
   Fire Prevention_____
   Suppression_____
   All employees_____
   Other agency_____   specify _____

5. Would you actively participate as a CRRT member?   Yes_____   No_____
   If yes, what motivates you to actively participate?
   _____
   _____
   If no, why would you not actively participate?
   _____
   _____

6. Would you support the formation of a CRRT?   Yes_____   No_____
   If you answered yes, why would you support a CRRT?
   _____
   _____
   If you answered no, why would you not support a CRRT?
   _____
   _____

APPENDIX (cont.)

7. A CRRT should be composed of members from:
    Administration_____
    Prevention_____
    Suppression_____
    Other agencies_____   Specify_____
    Combination_____

8. What training would be necessary to function as en effective CRRT member? Ex. Public speaking, presentation development, etc.

    _____
    _____

9. What CRR activities should the team directly perform?

    _____
    _____

10. What additional activities should the team coordinate?

    _____
    _____

    Additional comments:

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____