

FIREFIGHTERS to FIRE PREVENTERS
A CHANGE FOR THE WATERBURY FIRE DEPARTMENT

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

In December 1997, the City of Waterbury appointed a new Fire Chief. After his appointment, a number of changes occurred that would define how the Waterbury Fire Department would provide services to the community. The Fire Chief established a goal to increase the role of the fire department's fire fighting forces in fire prevention activities throughout the community.

The problem was that the Waterbury Fire Department was not effectively using fire department personnel in delivering public fire safety education. Fire companies had been a small part of the public fire safety education program but soon there would be an increase in their role in delivering these programs to the public.

The purpose of this applied research project was to develop a plan to effectively use suppression personnel in the Waterbury Fire Department to provide public fire safety education. This research project used the evaluative methodology to examine what steps would be needed to develop a plan to use suppression personnel by the Waterbury Fire Department to effectively deliver the Waterbury Fire Department's Public Fire Safety Education Program. The research questions to be answered were:

1. What procedures and methods should a fire department use to implement a public fire safety education program?
2. What training will be required for the members of the Waterbury Fire Department Bureau of Emergency Services so that they may effectively deliver a public fire safety education program?

3. What obstacles will the Waterbury Fire Department need to overcome in developing suppression personnel so that they can provide effective public fire safety education?

A survey of suppression personnel assessed how those members viewed their role in public fire safety education. This research found that members of the Waterbury Fire Department were willing to conduct public fire safety education programs but they felt that they were not prepared to do so. The survey indicated that additional training for personnel and additional public education resources were needed to effectively deliver the programs.

The literature review examined what steps the Waterbury Fire Department would need to take as well as what obstacles the Waterbury Fire Department would need to overcome to implement the needed changes in using the suppression personnel more effectively in delivering public fire safety education.

Recommendations included a greater commitment from the department, especially administrative and chief officers. The department must provide training that is appropriate for new recruit firefighters, firefighters and additional training for all company officers. The additional resources to be used by fire companies for public education programs must be purchased and maintained. These resources should be adequate in number and appropriate for each specific program.

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INTRODUCTION

In December 1997, the City of Waterbury appointed a new Fire Chief. After his appointment he instituted a number of changes that would define how the Waterbury Fire Department would provide services to the community. In June 1998, Fire Chief Robert Massicotte reported to the Board of Fire Commissioners in the City of Waterbury on the fire problem within the city and how the fire department could reduce those problems. Chief Massicotte stated that, "Through education – public fire safety education, our citizen's must be made aware of the magnitude of the fire threat to them personally." (Massicotte, 1998, p.4) The Fire Chief established a goal to increase the role of the Department's fire fighting forces in fire prevention activities in the community. Fire companies had been a small part of the public fire safety education program but soon there would be an increase in their role in delivering these programs to the public.

The problem was that the Waterbury Fire Department was not effectively using fire department personnel in delivering public fire safety education. The Waterbury Fire Department is an urban fire department that employs three hundred and forty-five members, three hundred and four of whom are assigned to the Bureau of Emergency Services (Table 1). Until recently, these members were not responsible for performing any organized prevention activities. All formal fire prevention activities as well as the statutorily required duties as described in the Connecticut General Statutes had been the responsibility of the Bureau of Fire Prevention (BFP). The bureau consists of a staff of fifteen members, which accounts for just slightly over four percent of the total number of personnel employed by the department. A member of the BFP had always presented all formal public education to the community. Fire companies had traditionally assisted

with some of these presentations but had usually confined there “public education” to community or school group visits to the fire stations or public appearances at local fairs and parades. The BFP needed to use the person that had been responsible for public education to perform other duties in the bureau because of the member’s certification that was required for those assigned duties. The City of Waterbury continues to suffer from financial difficulties and the possibility of increasing the staffing in the Bureau of Fire Prevention is not feasible.

“The fire suppression force, which accounts for nearly ninety percent of the personnel in the department, represents an untapped valuable fire prevention resource. Increasing the role of the suppression force to include fire prevention activities, provides the department with a cost effective option.” (Massicotte, 1993, p.2) This change in responsibilities and duties was not well received by all members of the department. The resistance to change had a negative effect on the public fire safety education program due to the lack of commitment from some members.

The purpose of this applied research project is to develop a plan to effectively use suppression personnel in the Waterbury Fire Department to provide public fire safety education. The research questions to be answered are:

1. What procedures and methods should a fire department use to implement a public fire safety education program?
2. What training will be required for the members of the Waterbury Fire Department Bureau of Emergency Services so that they may effectively deliver a public fire safety education program?

3. What obstacles will the Waterbury Fire Department need to overcome in developing suppression personnel so that they can provide effective public fire safety education?

BACKGROUND and SIGNIFICANCE

During the early part of the twentieth century, there were a number of disastrous fires that took a large number of lives. Eventually public awareness and concern increased to a point where newspapers and magazines were featuring articles discussing fire safety and the precautions that members of the general public could take in preventing fires. “But in spite of efforts in fire prevention education, the great losses of life in buildings and large property losses from major fires are written indelibly on the pages of twentieth-century history.” (International City/County Management Association [ICMA], 1988, p.18)

American fire service agencies continue to be challenged with fire protection problems that are increasing in magnitude and do not have sufficient resources, time and money to meet those challenges. To deal with those problems fire departments will need to address a number of issues including “educating the public in fire safety to combat ignorance, apathy, and indifference” (ICMA, 1988, p. 28)

The emphasis on fire prevention is stated in many fire departments’ mission statements and is discussed frequently in professional journals and publications. The National Fire Commission on Fire Prevention and Control stressed the importance of fire prevention in it’s 1973 report, *America Burning*.

“ There needs to be more emphasis on fire prevention. Fire departments, many of which confine their

roles to putting out fires and rescuing victims, need to expend more effort to educate children on fire safety, to educate adults through residential inspections, to enforce fire prevention codes, and to see that fire safety is designed into buildings.” (The National Fire Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, p. X)

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) established a commission in 1998 to review the progress of the fire service in dealing with the fire problem since the 1972 *America Burning* report. The commission commented on the accomplishments of the fire service stating that, “More than one-third of the *America Burning’s* recommendations have not been implemented and more than half were only partially implemented. During the intervening 28 years there was no systematic effort to track the implementation.” (Bernstein, 2000, p.1) The report filed in May 2000 by the Commission recommend updated approaches to fire prevention.

The city of Waterbury is a multi-cultural and ethnic city with a resident population of 110,000 covering an area of 26.5 square miles. The city is an aging mill city with a heavy fire load of closely spaced wood-frame buildings, high-rise elderly apartments, and numerous one and two family occupancies. Waterbury has suffered, along with many other cities in the northeast, with an unusually high vacancy rate and a number of abandoned buildings. Even with numerous vacant buildings fire statistics show that fires occurring in the city of Waterbury are consistent with the national statistics regarding fires in residential structures. “For the reporting period (1993-1997) 80% of the structure

fires occurred in residential occupancies – in the home.” (Massicotte, 1998, p.3) The National Fire Data Center determined that from 1987-1996 structure fires account for the vast majority of deaths, injuries, and property loss throughout the United States. Cooking was the leading cause for these fires. (United States Administration, 1999)

The Waterbury Fire Department is an urban fire department that employs three hundred and forty-five members. Table 1 outlines how those personnel are assigned. All staffing is required contractually with the local bargaining unit. (Local 1339 & The City of Waterbury, 1996)

Table 1. Waterbury Fire Department Uniformed Members

Bureau	Personnel	Chief Officers/ Bureau Head	Officers	Fire Fighters
Bureau of Administrative Services	2	2	0	0
Bureau of Instruction and Training	3	1	2	0
Bureau of Fire Prevention	15	1	4	10
Bureau of Alarms	9	1	4	4
Bureau of Automotive Repair	3	1		2
Bureau of Emergency Services	304	12	52	240

The department operates with three ladder companies, eight engine companies, and one rescue company on each of the four shifts. The city is divided into two battalions. A Deputy Chief supervises each shift and a Battalion Chief is assigned to each battalion (Waterbury Fire Department Rules and Regulations, 1999). The fire department is similar to most large municipal fire departments with the use of the suppression personnel primarily in a fire fighting function.

In 1998, the Fire Chief assigned additional duties and responsibilities to fire companies, including delivering public fire safety education programs. The labor agreement, Article XXX, between the city and union allows the department to assign fire prevention duties to fire suppression personnel. (Local 1339 & The City of Waterbury, 1996)

As a shift commander, the author was aware of problems and concerns from the members assigned to the Bureau of Emergency Services regarding the delivery of each public fire safety education program that was introduced in the last two years.

The National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program requires each participant to complete an applied research project within six months of completing the Strategic Management of Change module. This research project relates to the Strategic Management of Change course in that the intent of this research paper is to recommend a plan for the Waterbury Fire Department to affect a change. The desired change will occur with the Waterbury Fire Department's effective use of the suppression personnel to provide public fire safety education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is wide acknowledgement and acceptance that public education programs on fire prevention are effective. No prevention effort can succeed without a public education component. (Bernstein, 2000) Fire prevention is less spectacular than suppression. It is also less expensive and is universally accepted as the most effective means of accomplishing the mission of the fire service. (International City/County Management Association [ICMA], 1988) A well-planned fire prevention program includes a number of areas, with public fire safety education being a major component.

Many of the other areas that are required to be addressed regarding fire prevention can only be performed by certified personnel that normally are assigned to a fire marshal's office.

Although in existence for many years, the delivery system for public fire safety education activities has changed. Previously, inspections, consultations, or the fire incidents themselves have handled public fire safety education. Now public fire safety education has become an organized network of information and consultation, picking up where codes and ordinances leave off. Statistics show the greatest fire loss is in private homes. As fire departments can not inspect these buildings, it must rely on educating people. "The public must be taught to understand the risks and to cooperate in the area of fire prevention." (ICMA, 1988, p. 39)

The most effective way to reduce the loss of life from natural and man-made disasters is through a multi-hazard mitigation process that addresses all the hazards a community faces. Too many fires are caused by carelessness and ignorance of principals thought to be obvious. (Bernstein, 2000) The recent commission established by FEMA to review the recommendations established by the *America Burning* report recommends that, "These mitigation programs should be combined in a unified-hazard learning curriculum and implemented nationally by community and neighborhood fire services." (Bernstein, 2000, p.4) The report goes on to say that fire departments should be encouraged to spend even more time in reaching out to children in schools and other venues.

According to the International City/County Management Association, a public fire safety education program has three major requirements:

1. It is developed to achieve specific goals and objectives through well-organized lesson plans delivered by well-trained personnel.
2. It must have a competent staff to deliver the program.
The staff must be well-versed in educational methodology and fire safety. The staff must be adequately staffed to attain the department objectives.
3. The results of the program must be measurable. The use of data, post and pre testing data. (ICMA, 1988 p. 39)

Most fire departments do not have the “luxury of organizing a comprehensive prevention program from the ground up. Pieces of a program generally are in place, but they are often firmly entrenched within various departments or divisions, and each serves only one function in the total prevention program.” (ICMA, 1988 p. 379)

The International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA) describes public fire safety education as “a systematic approach to designing, implementing and evaluating those programs conducted to instruct the public about fire safety.” (IFSTA, 1993 p .9)
“Fire prevention is not only a local problem, it is also a local process.” (IFSTA, 1993 p.26)
For any program to be effective, it must address the needs of the community in addressing the local fire problem. In developing such a program, the department must have a plan.

Public fire safety education planning combines two essential ingredients: the planning process and the people who complete that planning process. A number of

texts and resource materials can guide a fire department in establishing a plan to provide public fire safety education.

Implementation of a public fire safety education program is the step in the process when the plan is put into action. The implementation of the plan includes activities such as producing and distributing materials, training personnel and involving the community in the education process.

“Probably the largest failure in the United States fire protection is not reaching a large enough portion of the population with high quality prevention messages.” (Schaenman, Stambaugh, Rossomando, Jennings & Perroni, 1990, p. 114) The basic goal of any public fire safety education program is to provide information to the public at large, especially high-risk target audiences. (IFSTA, 1993)

IFSTA, *Public Fire Education*, outlines steps to implementing a program. The first step in implementing a program is the production and distribution of materials such as pamphlets, brochures, videotapes, posters, and public service announcements.

- Assign production responsibilities
- Produce or purchase materials
- Distribute materials to target audiences

(IFSTA, 1993, p.27)

Successful programs may use materials that are not fancy but they are clear and in abundant quality. Public educators often go door to door, literally to distribute materials. (Schaenman et al, 1990) Once the objectives are determined for the program James C. Robertson states that, “ effective educational program materials should then be designed and developed. In the design of the material, the first goal is to determine

the message content. The messages should show the context of the problem and desired behavior. ” (Robertson, 2000 p.109) Once the message and the medium for delivering that message is decided upon the department must decide how it will be delivered and who will deliver the message. “The particular materials seemed to play less of a role than these factors and the energy and quality of the instruction.”(Schaenman et al, 1990 p.114)

IFSTA states that the second step in developing the program is the development of the personnel who will deliver the program to the public.

- Organize fire service personnel and volunteers
- Train people for their job
- Match community “ contacts” with target audiences (IFSTA, 1993, p.28)

To implement the public fire safety education program plan effectively there must be participation between the persons who develop the public fire safety education plan and those who will deliver the plan. Preparing personnel to deliver programs is an essential component in the public fire safety program. Fire departments must train personnel in the methods of delivering the programs and their messages. Fire departments have concentrated training activities on suppression activities. “The average individual joining either a career, volunteer, or combination-type fire department has received little information relating to fire prevention in the basic training program. Members of many explorer and other scout groups receive more training in fire prevention than does the person joining the average department.” (Robertson, 2000, p. 55)

“Today’s firefighter must become a communicator of facts relating to the causes and hazards of fire, a subject he knows well because he has seen it often. Just as the firefighter is trained in the nuts and bolts aspects of the job, he also needs to be trained in small group communications to effectively deal with the public discussions”. (IFSTA 1993, p.4) The text continues to stress that, “These skills are developed through training, refinement and perseverance. Such training should be at the core of an effective fire education commitment”. (IFSTA 1993,p.4)

Not every member of a fire department may have the psychological temperament or ability to practice the salesmanship required. However, if all members of a department were provided the necessary training in fire prevention procedures, codes, and practices, they would probably be better firefighters, able to answer the fire prevention questions of the general public intelligently. (National Fire Academy [NFA], 1990, p.5.8)

“Communication is nothing new for firefighters. Good communication is at the heart of operational effectiveness. It is also a part of the process of providing much needed advice to local people, businesses, authorities, and other services. But however much we take for granted at the day-to-day level, the challenge now is to ensure that communication also becomes one of the most effective firefighting weapons – essential and well designed component of any Fire Safety Toolkit.” (Evans, 1999, p.16)

The third and final step in implementing the program is obtaining audience participation and cooperation.

- Involve target groups in implementing programs

- Tell target audiences what to expect
- Reinforce messages through endorsement by local leaders (IFSTA, 1993, p.29)

“The selected audiences for public fire safety education programs should always be active participants in the education process.” (IFSTA, 1993, p.29) Effective communication is a two step process. Messages received through the mass media are far more effective when reinforced by opinion leaders respected in the high-risk group or by the community as a whole. (IFSTA, 1993) It is important to get the support of local government officials, elected officials and community leaders.

“Unless you are in one of the very few cities with an enormous public fire safety education budget, and can buy your way into the media, you can’t reach much of the public without help.”(Schaenman, Lundquist, Stambaugh, Camozzo, & Granito, 1987 p. 11) The person(s) who is (are) responsible for the public fire safety education program must work hard at developing contacts in the community. These persons are those that are supportive in helping the fire department get the message delivered. “Powerful allies are obtained, often in the business community or the education community to get through bureaucratic barriers and provide assistance”. (Schaenman et al, 1990 p. ix)

When implementing a public fire safety education program a number of obstacles may present themselves. “Common to many are the conditions considered necessary for the use of on-shift firefighters in fire prevention:

- a) The firefighter must be committed to the principal ”prevention is better than cure”.
- b) Firefighters must be properly trained to perform the functions required of them.

- c) Proper, modern resources should be provided for lectures and public education sessions.
- d) There should be an ongoing evaluation program to monitor results of the program over an extended period of time.
- e) There must be full support for the program from management. (Adamson, 1994, p.13)

The greatest challenge is that “There are still many organizations that only give lip service to community education. Most likely, this is because they and their personnel don’t have community education as a value.” (Marchone, 1997, p.55) Mary Marchone goes on to say that, “ these values can only come from strong leadership. We need leadership to motivate our employees, our departments and our elected officials on the importance and benefits of community education.” (Marchone, 1997, p.55)

Successful programs have “champions” who see the program through and leads its implementation. .”(Schaenman et al, 1990) The chief officers assigned to the Bureau of Emergency Services in the Waterbury Fire Department are the leaders of that bureau. The Waterbury Fire Department fire chief in his research found that “The organizational culture of the Waterbury Fire Department is built around the suppression effort. The chief officers in command of the suppression forces have been brought up in this culture and have been taught, both formally and informally, that suppression is a priority.” (Massicotte, 1993, p.18) In order for members to embrace the concepts of fire prevention and public education they must see the same commitment from the chief officers.

“To undertake this change however, requires a firm commitment from top level fire

management before you will be able to get firefighters enthusiastically involved. Fire chiefs must be leaders of change and set the priorities and direction of the department. They must be able to effectively communicate the plans and back them up with both emotional and financial support.” (Purchase, 1995, p. 30)

Firefighters involved in successful fire prevention activities should be able to see the benefits that those programs will bring to their department in terms of visibility and marketability. (Purchase, 1995) “All too often, line firefighters dismiss fire prevention as someone else’s job. It’s simply not as exciting as a working fire; the adrenaline does not flow.” (Smith, 1994, p.23)

Keith Adamson, an Assistant Chief Fire Officer with the Metropolitan Fire Brigades in Melbourne, Australia interviewed firefighters from that fire department and found that, “Many firefighters feel some regret for the reduction in the number of big fires through better prevention activities.” Additionally, Chief Adamson found that “Most firefighters are concerned about being placed in a role for which they lack skills and knowledge or appropriate resources.” (Adamson, 1994, p.14)

During times of financial problems with many cities’ budgets, unions and their members can be concerned about staffing issues and job security. “Some firefighters believe that an effective fire prevention program will lead to fewer fires and fewer firefighters. Well, they’re half right. There will be fewer fires. And the ones that do occur

will be less catastrophic, cause less damage and be responsible for fewer and less severe injuries.” (Smith, 1994, p.23)

PROCEDURES

This research project used the evaluative methodology to examine what steps will be needed to develop a plan to prepare suppression personnel by the Waterbury Fire Department to effectively deliver the Waterbury Fire Department’s Public Fire Safety Education Program. The research assessed how employees of the Waterbury Fire Department view public fire education and their role in delivering such programs.

The research procedures used in preparing this paper began with a literature review at the Learning Resource Center at the National Emergency Training Center in February 2000. Subsequent resources were loaned from the Learning Resource Center through the Interlibrary Loan Program. These reviews included research that was conducted by previous students in the Executive Officer Program, trade journals, magazines and textbooks on subjects that contained articles on fire prevention and public fire safety education. Additional literature reviews conducted at the Silas Bronson Library, Waterbury, CT and from materials in the author’s personal library included textbooks that have been written about fire prevention and public fire safety education. In addition, the Waterbury Fire Department Bureau of Instruction and Training provided information on recruit, in-service training and officer training.

A survey instrument entitled “Waterbury Fire Department Public Fire Education Program Employee Survey ” (Appendix A) was developed to gather information from members of Waterbury Fire Department. The information sought included their experiences with public fire safety education programs that they have taken part in

during their employment with the Waterbury Fire Department. The results of these surveys were entered into a relational database (Filemaker Pro3 for Windows) and analyzed. The results were tabulated and entered into a computerized spreadsheet (Excel) and were used to assist in answering the research questions.

The author conducted an interview with Albert Valerioti the Director of Training for the Waterbury Fire Department. Mr. Valerioti has been the bureau head of the Bureau of Instruction and Training for the Waterbury Fire Department for the past two years. Before that time, he was assigned as a Lieutenant, to the bureau as an instructor for ten years. The Director informed the author of the training and instruction that the bureau has conducted in the past in regards to fire prevention and public fire safety education. The bureau on a regular basis conducts all formal training. An in service training program has been developed and is presented monthly to all companies by that company's officer. The Waterbury Fire Department provides recruit training to all new hires. The Bureau of Instruction and Training provides this training.

Assumptions

The procedures used to complete this research project were based on the following assumptions: (1) that employees of the Waterbury Fire Department completing the survey and those interviewed were honest and objective in their responses, (2) that those employees did not discuss their replies with one another and, (3) it was assumed that all authors included in the review performed objective and unbiased research.

Limitations

This research project was limited by the six-month time limit that was imposed by the National Fire Academy for the completion of the Executive Fire Officer applied research project. The time taken to conduct the literature review was insufficient as to allow the author to develop appropriate questions from the literature reviewed for the surveys. The time limit also affected the responses that were received from those surveyed. Only 46% of the employees responded to the survey. The author felt that an additional request to those not completing the survey would have been beneficial.

Another limitation of this research was that the survey instrument could have been better developed with questions that were more appropriate. Before surveying department members, the author did not have other persons sample the survey instrument. In conducting a sample survey, ambiguous questions and errors in instructions could have been identified and corrected. Specifically, the question number five asked about a member conducting a program. The intent was to get a reply that would have shown if a member had been involved in any manner in delivering a public fire safety education program. The term "conduct" may have lead to confusion in that a member may have felt that they personally lead the instruction or program.

The process of distributing the survey to employees of the Waterbury Fire Department could have been better devised. An exact number of survey instruments were delivered to each fire company and bureau so that each employee assigned to that fire company or bureau could receive a copy. A list of those assigned was attached to the envelope and the supervisor would note who had been given a survey form. The completed forms were to be returned in the same envelope. The intent of this process

was to allow every employee to have an opportunity to submit a completed form anonymously. The instructions that were given to the supervisors were not clear in how the forms were to be distributed and collected. The result of this was that there was not an accurate control of who completed the survey. It was then difficult to determine who had not had the opportunity to submit the forms. The process did not allow the author to survey completely the greatest number possible of the employees of the Waterbury Fire Department.

The informal comments that were communicated to the author from those delivering the surveys included concerns by the participants that the survey and ultimately the research document might be used to increase training and/or the use of fire companies for public fire education programs. Those comments suggested that not only did the members surveyed not desire to continue with any additional public education programs they also did not want any additional training time. This may have lead been a reason why a number of members did not complete or return the survey.

Definition of Terms

Public fire safety education – A systematic approach to designing, implementing and evaluating those programs conducted to instruct the public about fire safety.

Fire prevention – The methods that an organization employs including inspection and code enforcement, public fire safety education, arson prevention programs, and fire and arson investigation.

In service training – Fire training that takes place in a fire company while the company is available for emergency response. Subjects are instructed by company officers.

RESULTS

1. What procedures and methods should a fire department use to implement a public fire safety education program?

The literature review found that the implementation of a public fire safety education program should take place incrementally. The first step in implementing the program is the design and production of materials to be used in the program. In his report, *Proving Public Fire Education Works*, Philip Schaenman et al explains that,

"those successful programs had adequate, accurate materials to use to spread the message. The materials can be developed by the fire department or they may be purchased or acquired from other organizations. It goes without saying that if the materials do not convey correct, on target information, people who are trained with them cannot be expect to act properly in an emergency."

(Schaenman et al, 1990 p. 114)

Many fire departments are not able to budget adequate funds to purchase or develop resources. "Only a small fraction of the average fire department's operating budget is spent on fire prevention activities" (Appy, 1998, p.28) The Commission reviewing *America Burning* in 2000 reported to FEMA and the USFA suggested that:

- The use of existing community resources (E.G. schools, community groups and activities, houses of worship, and social, medical, and other

educational services), to deliver the messages to audiences already in place

- The development and utilization of private sector partnerships with enterprises that have investments in the reduction of fire losses, such as insurance companies, both property casualty and life and health

(Bernstein, 2000, p.10)

Jeanette Hentze writes that, “ Educational funding usually ends up on the cutting room floor during budget time. However, alternative sources must be found to purchase needed equipment, especially for fire education. (Hentze, 1997, p. 11)

Resources used are dependent on the types of programs developed and used. A number of videotapes and written materials are available through public and private organizations. The United States Fire Administration publishes the *Resource Directory*, which catalogues a number of fire prevention and public education materials available through that agency. The National Fire Protection Agency offers a number of resources for purchase. However, for the most part, fire departments do not request monies for development of localized materials. The development efforts are usually bootlegged one way or another using talent within the department, or by friends of the department. (Schaenman et al, 1987)

2. What training will be required for the members of the Waterbury Fire

Department Bureau of Emergency Services so that they may effectively deliver a public fire safety education program?

The second step in implementing a public fire safety education program is the preparation of those people or groups that will be responsible for delivering the program. Public education programs can be delivered utilizing fire department personnel, public and private school teachers, through public media, and other organizations.

The Waterbury Fire Department provides minimal training for recruits and firefighters in regards to fire prevention and education. (Table 2)

Table 2
Waterbury Fire Department - Employee Data

Officer or # of years on department	Members completing survey	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Never	Fire Cos. Should deliver programs with BFP	BFP should deliver programs with fire company	WFD should designate a unit or company to deliver Public fire safety education program	Have conducted Public fire safety education program	I have been Trained to conduct Public fire safety education program	Training was adequate	yes	no	Interested in additional training in Public fire safety education	Not sure
Officer	29	0	1	13	1	10	12	7	27	7	1	13	11	5	
<5 yr.	39	2	4	16	3	7	15	8	20	2	0	13	10	16	
5-10 yr.	42	1	21	4	4	11	17	10	28	11	5	8	24	10	
11-15 yr.	34	0	2	11	5	12	13	6	29	6	2	10	18	6	
16-20 yr.	14	1	0	6	2	5	7	4	13	1	1	6	6	2	
>20 yr.	5	0	0	3	2	0	2	1	4	1	0	1	2	2	

In departments that emphasize recruit prevention training, in service training and officer training it was found that firefighters embrace prevention and public education in a positive manner. (Norman, 1994) A Waterbury Fire Department fire captain, a 23-year

veteran of the Waterbury Fire Department, explained to the author that, “I was never trained to teach Pub Ed nor do I want to. I was trained to fight fires.”

The author conducted an interview with Albert Valerioti the Director of Training for the Waterbury Fire Department. The Director explained to the author what training and instruction that bureau had conducted in the past in regards to fire prevention and public fire safety education. Only one formal training program has ever been given to members of suppression forces. That training occurred in 1999. This was to introduce the fire companies to a new public fire education program that was being introduced to the community. Each fire company received approximately a one hour description and instruction in how to deliver the program.

One of the departments monthly training sessions included an in service program for fire companies in 1998. The training was used to introduce members to the first organized public fire safety education program that the fire companies would be presenting to the public.

The Waterbury Fire Department provides recruit training to all new hires. The Bureau of Instruction and Training provides this training. The training curriculum is based on the NFPA 1001 Standard for Firefighter training. The recruit program is an eight-week (320-hour) program. As part of the curriculum, the new firefighters are given about a six-hour module of instruction to introduce them to fire prevention. An additional two hours were added to the program in 1998 to review the Waterbury Fire Department’s public fire safety education programs with the recruits. Any additional training in this subject matter is part of the in service training that the firefighter will receive after their assignment to a fire company.

The Waterbury Fire Department does not have a formal company officer training program. Mr. Valerioti is designing a company officer training program. He does not intend to include a public fire safety education module at this time. The reason for this is because of the time constraints allowed by the Waterbury Fire Department for conducting such a training program. As the bureau head, Mr. Valerioti does not see any plans to develop a training program to train personnel in the delivery of fire prevention or public fire safety education courses in the near future of the department.

“Fortunately, the National Fire Academy is at the forefront in promoting community education. It has offered a nine-day resident course, ‘Developing Fire and Life Safety Strategies,’ and a regional course called ‘Presenting Public Education Programs’ “ according to Mary Marchone. (Marchone, 1997, p.54)

3. What obstacles will the Waterbury Fire Department need to overcome in developing suppression personnel so that they can provide effective public fire safety education?

The obstacles that must be addressed can be broken down into three specific areas. The initial concerns occur at the administrative level, secondly are the concerns of the fire suppression personnel, and last but certainly not the least are those of the community.

Obstacles – Administrative

The administrative obstacles that need to be addressed are those obstacles including the level of commitment to the program at the administrative level. This commitment to the program and to those members presenting the programs are summarized in the belief in public fire safety education by elected officials, the fire chief,

chief officers and company officers. By providing support, training and adequate resources the fire department shows its commitment to the members.

“The evidence suggests that fire departments do address fire prevention in their mission statements but in light of the small allocation of resources given to prevention, it appears that the fire service gives only ‘lip service’ to this philosophy.” (Richardson, 1994, p. 12)

The Waterbury Fire Department does not have a specific line item in the budget for fire prevention activities. Funding for any materials comes from other areas of the budget including training, dues and subscriptions, and equipment requests from the Bureau of Fire Prevention. (Waterbury Fire Department, Annual Budget, 1999) No more than \$1000 is spent annually on fire prevention materials. These expenses include professionally produced videos and numerous brochures.

Many departments starve their public education units for materials such as films, safety booklets, and videotapes. “ A multi-million dollar fire department budget may allocate less for prevention materials than a set of spare tires for a rig.” (Schaenman et al, 1987, p.19)

A review of the survey (Table 3) found that twenty-five percent of those members surveyed felt the resources used by the Waterbury Fire Department were usually adequate. While 36% felt that the materials were only sometimes adequate.

Table 3
Waterbury Fire Department
Public Fire Safety Education Resources

	Resources were adequate	Videos were appropriate	Handouts were appropriate	Facility used was adequate	Used fire station for Public fire safety education
Never	11	4	5	7	18
Sometimes	48	35	21	38	77
Usually	33	50	52	44	10
Always	13	13	18	13	2
Not Sure	34	32	27	31	35

By reviewing comments from those surveyed, the author's assumption is that the resources were not always appropriate due to the age and the size of the audience. Written comments provided by those surveyed found it was not the additional duties that were of the greatest concern with the members. The comments included those from Lieutenant John Calabrese, Waterbury Fire Department whose concerns included;

“The program needs some fine-tuning in the way of a hardware package i.e. TV, VCR, visual aids of various types Pub Ed is an ongoing program and should not be crammed only in October. A good Pub Ed Program class may take more than one hour of time using different “props” and it could be conducted in a more entertaining way to hold attention. It is

difficult to tailor a session to a special age group with the minimum equipment and supplies we are given.”

In order for there to be commitment and support from those personnel that are expected to deliver public education programs they must see the same commitment and support from those individuals that are the leaders in the fire department. Chief officers and company officers have traditionally come through the fire ranks and have had a suppression mentality. The chiefs lack of education and lack of experience in prevention can create a non-supportive environment.” (Schaenman et al, 1987) “If the company commander denigrates public fire education, it will be difficult for his troops to show enthusiasm.” (Schaenman et al, 1987, p.30)

This mentality and thought process is similar to the one found in the Waterbury Fire Department. When Robert Massicotte researched the values of chief officers, he confirmed that, “The organizational culture of Waterbury Fire Department is built around the suppression effort. The chief officers in command of the suppression forces have been brought up in this culture and have been taught, both formally and informally, that suppression is a priority. “ (Massicotte, 1993, p.18). All chief officers surveyed in 1993 have since retired, yet it appears to the author that the chief officers that now are presently assigned to those suppression positions have not substantially changed their attitudes.

Fire departments must also show a commitment to the program by training personnel in the proper methods of delivering public fire education. The commitment of time and resources are required in order to train personnel. These obstacles at the

administrative level come down to time and money. To develop personnel so that they can effectively deliver public fire safety education the Waterbury Fire Department will need to develop personnel and change attitudes. Ms. Marchone states that “The training could be vital to your organization and the way your fire department is run.” (Marchone, 1997, p.54) “

Obstacles - Personnel

Motivation of employees so that they will embrace the concepts of fire prevention and public education will occur when they understand the benefits of such programs. The primary obstacles that must be overcome include the members’ comfort level in delivering the programs and the realization of the personal rewards that the program will give them. The first step in developing a change in attitude is for firefighters to understand the importance of fire prevention along with seeing a commitment from the administration. (Richardson, 1994)

The feelings of excitement and job satisfaction are the very things that set the mental roadblocks in place opposing the seemingly not so heroic fire prevention programs. (Purchase, 1995) “Prevention is not what ninety-nine percent of firefighters sign up for. It has not been part of the image of what a firefighter is nor is it a heartfelt part of the job for a majority of the fire service today” (Schaenman et al, 1987, p.22)

The results of the survey (Table 2) of the suppression members of the Waterbury Fire Department shows that 70% have conducted a public fire education program. Thirty- percent of those surveyed felt that fire companies should only sometimes deliver the public education program while just 20% feel that fire companies should mostly give these programs. Twenty-six percent felt that the fire companies should be conducting

the programs and receiving assistance from the Bureau of Fire Prevention. However, the greatest number, 40%, answered that the Bureau of Fire Prevention should be responsible for presenting the program.

A Waterbury Fire Department firefighter comment on the survey stated that, “ To many times a company is given an assignment when there is poor communication to that company giving the presentation and there is no time to prepare. This leads to poor presentations.” (Anonymous Firefighter Waterbury Fire Department, Survey) Yet, other members show that they do not understand the importance of such programs. “Delivering public ed takes away from providing fire service....” (Anonymous Firefighter, Waterbury Fire Department, Survey)

The literature review found that another of the barriers that the fire department may need to overcome is with the union. “Union positions on prevention are often misunderstood, but the perception that the union will automatically resist fire prevention duties still act as a barrier. Public education initiatives can and should be discussed with the union officials; their attitudes should not be assumed before this discussion.” (Schaenman et al, 1987, p.7)

Members must see how public fire education programs can ultimately benefit them personally. One of the reasons to be stressed to firefighters is their personal safety. A sound prevention program will have the overall effect of mitigating many hazards that may ultimately save the lives of firefighters in a suppression situation.

In order to overcome cultural barriers, effective managers should devise ways to use the strengths of strong organizational cultures to help sell change within the organization. (Richardson, 1994)

Obstacles - Public

An obstacle to delivering public fire education to the public can be the perception that the public may have of what the function of the fire department is. The change in policy of not keeping firefighters in the fire station, ever prepared to respond to every emergency, may be a different concept for the public and the elected officials in a community. "A vigorous fire safety program that places fire service personnel in frequent contact with the people of the community can do much to enhance the image of the fire department. It may help to erase some preconceived notions on the part of the public of the work of the fire service." (Robertson, 2000, p. 56)

When apparatus is scene parked on the street in front of a building that has no apparent emergency some citizens may feel uncomfortable. The fire department must make people aware that the fire department does provide services other than those of an emergency nature.

DISCUSSION

The intent of this research paper was to show the need to continue the present public fire safety programs of the Waterbury Fire Department. To deliver those programs effectively the Waterbury Fire Department must use the fire suppression forces.

When firefighters spend much of their time on duty waiting for the next alarm they may not be fulfilling their obligation and duty to, "deliver to the citizens of the City of Waterbury the highest degree of protection of life, property, and the environment." (Waterbury Fire Department Rules and Regulations, 1999, p. i)

The Waterbury Fire Department has had good compliance in delivering fire prevention activities by using fire companies to deliver public fire safety education programs. Fire companies responded whenever the department received a request for any public education program. Each of the past two years fire companies have actively participated in the NFPA's annual Fire Prevention Week activity. Information reviewed and analyzed did not show any need for the Waterbury Fire Department to discontinue the use of fire suppression personnel and in-service fire companies to deliver public fire safety education.

In order for the Waterbury Fire Department to use fire suppression personnel effectively in delivering public fire safety education the author has identified a number of organizational changes that need to occur.

To initiate such a program it is important to meet the needs of the community as well as the needs of the members at every level of the fire department. It is equally important to include the political entities such as the mayor and the City of Waterbury Board of Fire Commissioners. To implement a public fire safety education program a fire department must first review the plans for the public fire safety education that have been developed by the fire department for fire prevention in the community. After the review process the department can then put the plan into action.

The implementation of the program begins with the decision on what the content of the material will be so that the message that is needed to be relayed in the -program can be best communicated. Once that message is determined, the program must decide what materials need to be purchased or developed to deliver the message of fire safety. There are several materials published that are available for purchase from

different organizations. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) as well as United States Fire Administration offers a number of different written materials and videotapes. The fire department can choose material based on the subject matter and needs of the program. Other organizations and businesses offer similar materials at minimal or no cost. Insurance companies are another good resource to request to get free fire prevention materials.

The alternative to purchasing materials or seeking donated materials is for the fire department to design and develop their own materials. This may be an affordable alternative. A problem with producing the materials with resources from within the department is that it may say more about the fire department than their public education programs. Although materials contain good information if they are not of professional quality, the message may be lost and members of the public may not take the program seriously. Without good materials, the people presenting the program will not see a commitment from the fire department.

Once the materials become available, personnel will be expected to deliver the message. The personnel must be properly trained to perform the functions required to deliver public fire safety education programs. A report filed in May 2000 by the commission that was established by the United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommended the need to train fire officers “ so that they can be better prepared to deal with the media – for public information, education, and relations.” (Bernstein, 2000, p.10)

Additional training will be required for members of the Waterbury Fire Department so that they may effectively deliver a public fire safety education program.

The research found that the present level of training was inadequate for those persons that are responsible for delivering the programs.

Upon entering the fire service, employees must be taught about fire prevention and public education in recruit classes. The opportunity to show the commitment of the fire department to fire prevention will be a foundation for additional public education classes when the firefighters are assigned to a company. After assignment to a fire company, a firefighter may never see any additional formal public education training.

Waterbury Fire Department firefighters and company officers felt that they have not received sufficient training before being assigned the responsibility of delivering the public education programs. The survey of Waterbury Fire Department suppression personnel conducted by the author (Table 2) showed that although 70% of those surveyed have conducted a program only 22% of those were trained to do so. When questioned about the training received only 7% of those conducting the programs felt that their training was adequate. Thirteen out of twenty-nine (45%) of the company officers surveyed and twenty-eight percent (28%) of the firefighters surveyed said that though they have not received sufficient training before delivering public education programs they would be willing to receive additional training.

The fire department training bureau can develop training programs on the subject matter of fire prevention and public education or the bureau can deliver a program developed by other agencies. Training programs are available from such organizations as the Connecticut Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and the National Fire Academy.

The commitment to train members takes time and costs money. Many fire departments short change themselves by not funding and staffing training bureaus so that they can deliver these programs. "It is another of the things reduced in times of budget cutbacks. But training firefighters to deliver public education is a way to increase productivity of the entire department at a very low cost." (Schaenman et al, 1987, p.31)

Waterbury Fire Department must overcome a number of obstacles in order to develop suppression personnel so that they can provide effective public fire safety education. The use of on-shift firefighters to deliver a fire department's public fire safety education program will only be effective when the fire department is committed to the principal that fire prevention is better than the "cure" of fire suppression.

The Waterbury Fire Department must show a commitment to the program. From the mayor to the fire chief there must be a commitment and belief in fire prevention. There is no better commitment to those programs than having the elected officials, the fire chief and chief officers become actively involved in the program. In order for the fire department to show its commitment and a sincere belief in public education, it must work hard at overcoming barriers that exist. One of the first steps in doing so is to fund public fire education.

The research showed that the Waterbury Fire Department does not adequately fund the program. Though some resources are purchased for the program, most resources are internally produced, borrowed or bootlegged. "In departments coast to coast, fire safety education is one of the first functions to be cut when budget levels drop." (Schaenman et al, 1987, p. 19) Members that were responsible for delivering the programs frequently commented on the need for "better and more" resources so that

they could do the job correctly. The fire department should provide proper, modern resources for lectures, public meetings, and group programs. Written and audio/visual materials should be current and age appropriate.

Before requiring personnel to deliver public education programs, the fire department must educate the members regarding the importance of fire prevention and public education. The department must provide sufficient training so those members will feel confident in being able to provide the programs.

The research found that the Waterbury Fire Department has provided minimal training in public education. This has led to members feeling unprepared to meet with the public and discuss fire prevention. This is consistent with how other fire departments are training their personnel. "There is no question that certain skills required for fire prevention assignments are beyond those required for basic fire suppression duties."(Robertson, 2000, p.56) Thirty-one percent of those surveyed for this paper were unsure whether they had an interest in any additional training. This may be because members are still not sure of the public fire safety program or the fire departments commitment to the program.

When personnel believe there is a commitment from the fire department, there is a greater chance that they will become committed to the public education program. This commitment must also come from the chief officers responsible for fire suppression. The chief officers in the Waterbury Fire Department do not take an active role in the public education programs. In order for suppression personnel to have "buy-in" for public fire safety education there must be a proper attitude and commitment from the leaders of that bureau. "If the company commander and battalion chief's view public

education as a wasteland not befitting the departments macho image, then those who wish to engage in prevention may be kidded right out of that desire.” (Schaenman et al, 1987, p.30)

The firefighter must also be committed to the principal that fire prevention is better than the “cure” of fire suppression. Members of the Waterbury Fire Department are similar to most firefighters in that they see their primary role as a suppression specialist, to fight fires. “The glamour and excitement of using skill, strength and bravery to ‘save the city’ is why most firefighters join their profession” (Adamson, 1994, p. 2)

“Some firefighters resist being assigned to public education work because they fear they will not be successful. Firefighters are not recruited for their speaking skills or for their ability to educate others. Being selected as a firefighter means you are strong, agile, in good health, smart enough to pass a stiff entrance exam, and of good character. These attributes certainly do not preclude having the ability to be good at public education too, but the selection process does not screen for specific public educator skills.” (Schaenman et al, 1987, p.25)

As new recruits, firefighters are encouraged not to speak and told to keep their mouths shut and their ears open. Many firefighters may never feel comfortable presenting programs to the public. Comments written to the author on the survey form

confirm this. “To many times a company is given an assignment and we are not prepared and don’t have all the equipment we need. This leads to poor presentations.” (Anonymous company officer, Waterbury Fire Department). Another Waterbury Fire Department firefighter wrote saying, “Strong fear of public speaking inclines me not to want to get involved in this. I would believe public speaking fears would be my biggest obstacle.” (Name withheld by request)

A union represents all members of the Bureau of Emergency services. The concerns of unions are to provide jobs for their members and their working conditions. The fire department must address the concerns of the union when implementing public education programs. “The locals need to be persuaded as to the value of new programs. Involving union officials early in the planning phase of the public education efforts can take into account legitimate concerns about work loads and help bring programs on line smoothly.” (Schaenman et al, 1987, p.7-8) In hard money times and with fewer fires, heightened participation by firefighters in prevention activities may enhance funding availability, maintain staffing and ultimately prevent civilianization of prevention activities. (Norman, 1994)

In closing, the fire suppression personnel surveyed indicated their willingness to provide fire education safety programs in the community. The department must address the members concerns regarding training and resources. Through motivation, leadership and training firefighters can effectively deliver programs in the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Everyone in the Waterbury Fire Department has a role to play in the process of implementing changes to the present public fire education program. The fire department

administrators, chief officers, and bureau heads must stress the importance of the fire prevention activities. Company officers must recognize the legitimacy of fire prevention activities by supporting and promoting the program to firefighters assigned to their fire company. Firefighters must understand the mission of the fire department and how they can contribute to the mission through public fire education programs.

To insure the future success of the public fire safety education program, the author is recommending the following changes for the Waterbury Fire Department. These changes as outlined occur in four general areas; administrative, training, budget, and resources.

Administrative

- The Waterbury Fire Department must create a vision for the fire department where fire prevention and public fire safety programs become as important as all other services provided by the department. The fire department must determine and define those goals specific to public fire safety education and explain the benefits to the program to the public, the elected officials and the members of the fire department.
- The Fire Chief should meet with bureau heads to outline the plan to change priorities towards fire prevention. Chief officers in the Bureau of Emergency Services will be shown how the bureau and their personnel will benefit personally. In communicating the strategy of the proposed changes to the public education program, the Fire Chief must announce program updates and priorities.

- The plan for delivering the public fire safety education program should be presented to the City of Waterbury Board of Fire Commissioners. The purpose of the presentation is to allow the Board the opportunity to approve and endorse the public fire safety education program.
- In order to minimize initial resistance to changes in the program the fire department must effectively communicate the goals, objectives and intentions to both the members and the public. The Fire Chief should send a personal letter to each fire company explaining the purpose and benefits of additional responsibilities.
- The Fire Chief in his presentation to the Board of Fire Commissioners and in the correspondence to the members must describe where the organization is now, where it needs to go and how it will get there. The reports should include:
 - A report on the fire departments experience with public education. The report should show number of persons affected by programs, feedback from those persons and include any specific occurrences.
 - The goals of the fire department in regards to the public fire safety education program
 - A description of what changes in current programs are to be anticipated and how those changes will affect the program, the public and the members personally.

Training

- Training should be provided for chief officers in fire prevention and public education program design and management. The training can be provided by outside sources such as the Connecticut State Fire academy or the National Fire Academy.
- Training for company officers in fire prevention and public education should be included in the company officer training program that is presently being developed by the Waterbury Fire Department. The Bureau of Instruction and Training will administer this training program. All current company officers will be scheduled to attend at least this module of the training program.
- The Bureau of Instruction and Training will need to deliver a training program to fire companies to review procedures in delivering public education.
- The Bureau of Instruction and Training will need to add additional time to the curriculum in future recruit classes to train personnel in fire prevention and public fire safety education.

Budget

- In the fiscal year 2001-2002 fire department budget, a specific line item for public education should be added to the budget. In developing this area of the budget, the fire department must consider present and future needs. The budget should include the cost of additional training,

development of needed materials, and the purchase of audio-visual equipment.

Resources

- Additional resources need to be purchased for public fire education. Fire prevention and public education resource materials need to be updated and/or purchased in a number of formats. The use of written and graphic materials can include posters, brochures, coloring books, and worksheets to name just a few.
- Equipment to be considered for acquisition should include:
 - “Pluggie” or other robotic device
 - VCRs and a portable VHS projector

The change in the role of fire suppression personnel in the Waterbury Fire Department can not occur without the commitment from the City, the Department, the chief officers and the firefighters. However, the change can occur with implementing appropriate change techniques and applying these recommendations.

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APPENDIX A
Waterbury Fire Department
Public Fire Education Program
Employee Survey

April 2,2000

To: All department members
From: George Klauber, Deputy Chief
Subj.: Public Fire Education - Survey

Presently the Waterbury Fire Department uses fire companies to deliver its fire education program. Feedback that I have received regarding the program has been varied. As part of a research project I am conducting in conjunction with the Executive Development course at the National Fire Academy, please find enclosed a survey titled "Public Fire Education Program". My intent is to use this information to develop recommendations for the Waterbury Fire Department in order to enhance the present program.

I am requesting that you complete the survey, and return it at your earliest convenience. The information gathered from other members of the Waterbury Fire Department will be combined and evaluated. Your company, bureau, nor you will be identified in the report with out your permission. The information compiled may be used to assist the Waterbury Fire Department in developing an employee evaluation and performance program.

Sincerely,

George Klauber
Deputy Fire Chief

**Waterbury Fire Department
Public Fire Education Program
Employee Survey**

Years on the FD <5 5-10 11-15 16-20 > 20

Officer YES NO

Fire Companies should Always Sometimes Not Sure
deliver Pub Ed programs Never Not Sure

Bureau of Fire Prevention Always Never Not Sure
deliver Pub Ed programs Sometimes With Fire Company

I have conducted a Yes No Not Sure
Pub Ed program

I was trained to Yes No Not Sure
Conduct program

Training was adequate Yes No Not Sure

Resources were adequate Never Sometimes Usually
 Always Not Sure

Videos were appropriate Never Sometimes Usually
 Always Not Sure

Handouts were appropriate Never Sometimes Usually
 Always Not Sure

Facility was adequate Never Sometimes Usually
 Always Not Sure

Used Station for program Never Sometimes Usually
 Always Not Sure

Unit/company should be Yes No Not Sure
designated to deliver
Pub Ed programs

I am interested in additional Yes No Not Sure
Training in delivering
Pub Ed

Optional – Name _____

Comments -