

URBAN PUBLIC FIRE EDUCATION: GROWTH FROM NEIGHBORHOOD TO CITY-WIDE PROGRAMS IN CHICAGO

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FOREWORD

The American city has unique fire education needs. Population density, deteriorating neighborhoods, and fragmented communities are becoming more prevalent as the migration to the cities continues. In 1970, more than 149 million Americans -- almost three-quarters of the population -- lived in urban areas. Greater fire safety for these people is the goal of urban public fire educators.

The Public Education Office of the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration is making this booklet available as a source of ideas and approaches for urban fire departments which are -- or would like to be -- actively involved in public education for reduced fire loss.

Richard Strother
Associate Administrator
National Fire Prevention and
Control Administration

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Chicago Fire Prevention Bureau has increased its efforts to provide targeted fire education for Chicago's 3,369,000 residents. Like education programs in other communities, Chicago's activities began on a modest scale and have expanded as an increasingly larger role was seen for public fire education. This booklet describes the growth and change of public fire education programs in Chicago.

We welcome the opportunity to share our programs with other urban fire educators and hope this information will help our colleagues plan and implement effective education programs in their communities.

James R. Newbold
Director, Fire Prevention Bureau
Chicago Fire Department

OPERATION PRIDE: HOME INSPECTIONS IN URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS

As urban neighborhoods deteriorate, fire incidence often increases. The Chicago Fire Prevention Bureau identified home fire safety inspections and neighborhood clean-up campaigns as intervention strategies to halt increased fire rates. To help reduce fire incidence in inner-city neighborhoods, Chicago's Operation Pride, through voluntary home inspection and a clean-up program, was begun in June 1975.

Teams of two firefighters went door-to-door, block-by-block, talking about residential fire safety and offering to conduct a free home fire inspection. With the resident's permission, the teams conducted informal home fire safety inspections. During the informal sessions, team members identified countless potential hazards for the residents to correct. When the residents refused fire service entry for an inspection, the teams distributed fire safety and escape planning literature.

Recognizing that many of the conditions were difficult or impossible for the residents to correct, the inspection teams emphasized what the residents could do. Clean-up of trash and proper storage of items in apartments, halls, and stairways became a major theme of Operation Pride. Each inspection included a notice that the Department of Sanitation would send extra trucks for special neighborhood trash pick-ups within a few days.

The program's success depended on cooperation between the Fire Department and the Department of Sanitation. For example, the credibility of Operation Pride rested on the garbage trucks arriving according to the schedule announced by the inspection teams. A threat to this credibility arose when potential public response to the program outran the availability of trucks.

The two city departments solved the problem cooperatively. Rather than risk missing schedules or overcommitting the Department of Sanitation, the Fire Prevention Bureau decided to concentrate the program in three neighborhood battalions with the highest fire incident rate. The Department of Sanitation agreed to commit enough trucks to cover these three high-risk neighborhoods.

The 12th Battalion serves one Operation Pride neighborhood and has kept records on structural fires.

STRUCTURAL FIRES
12TH BATTALION

<u>1974</u>	<u>1975*</u>	<u>1976</u>
1211	913	788

While it is impossible, in this instance, to know how much of the reduced loss is due to home inspection, the decrease is encouraging.

*"Operation Pride" began in June 1975

FIRE SAFETY FOR SPANISH-SPEAKING NEIGHBORHOODS

Chicago's Spanish-speaking residents suffer unusually high rates of fire deaths and incidence. The apparent success of "Operation Pride" led the Fire Prevention Bureau to apply the inspection program (without the extra garbage pick-ups) to Spanish-speaking neighborhoods. To meet the needs of the community, three requirements were identified:

1. Ability to communicate fire safety information to non-English-speaking residents;
2. Fire service identity as a source of help, rather than as representative of law enforcement agencies or the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.
3. Endorsement of the home inspection and residential fire safety program by local opinion leaders.

Cooperation with Other City Departments

An initial step in providing Spanish-speaking Chicagoans with fire safety information was furnishing the fire service with a Spanish language capability. Twenty-five Department of Human Services translators and 25 uniformed firefighters became fire safety teams for inspections in Spanish neighborhoods.

"En Casa de Fuego"

Identifying the firefighter/interpreter team as safety resources, rather than as threats, was the next step in Chicago's plan. In one action, the Fire Prevention Bureau achieved this safety identification by seeking and receiving the endorsement of the

Roman Catholic Church, an extremely influential voice in the Spanish-speaking community. This was achieved through cooperation with the local affiliate of the Catholic Television Network (CTN), a nationwide organization with stations in a dozen U.S. cities.

The result of CTN and Fire Prevention Bureau cooperation was "En Casa de Fuego en Su Casa," a 13-minute closed-circuit television program produced by CTN. Narrated by the then-Bureau Director, Francis Murphy, the program featured simultaneous translation by Father Pedro Rodriguez, a Spanish-speaking priest. In the film Murphy and Rodriguez urge the audience to cooperate with the firefighter/inspector teams, who "represent only the fire department, not the police, not Immigration, not any local, State, or Federal agency of the law." The film gave real-life examples of a typical home safety inspection and the hazards actually found in homes. It was emphasized that the firefighters would distribute fire safety literature in Spanish.

During February and March 1977, the program was broadcast in the parish hall immediately after services in 69 parishes offering a Spanish Mass. Inspection teams reported an increase in completed inspections following the broadcast.

Materials for Distribution

Producing Spanish materials for distribution in Chicago neighborhoods with high fire incident rates was the result of cooperation between the Fire Prevention Bureau and several organizations.

The Chicago Tribune devoted a full-page to "En Casa de Fuego/ In Case of Fire," a Spanish and English fire safety guide. The Continental Bank later reprinted the article in brochure form as a public service. Continental Bank, the Chicago Tribune, and the Department of Human Services/Fire Department teams distributed the brochure.

In other activities, the Fire Prevention Bureau and the Department of Human Services produced home escape planning guidelines in Spanish. With the permission of the National Fire Protection Association, the Department of Human Services reproduced "Learn Not to Burn" handouts in Spanish and in several other languages for Fire Department distribution.

TRANSITION TO A CITY-WIDE PROGRAM

The demand for programs for Spanish-speaking Chicagoans grew until the Fire Prevention Bureau could not, on its own, meet the requests. At that point, the Chicago Fire Department turned to the Federal Government for funding.

Of the many types of available fire service funding,* the Chicago Fire Department selected the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) as the most suitable source of financial assistance. The program provides formula grants to assist in the employment

*See Sources of Federal Funds For the Fire Services, compiled by the National Fire Data Center, NFPCA.

and training of public service employees, including the fire service. Areas of at least 100,000 population, including cities, counties or states, are eligible to apply for CETA funds.

CETA funding permitted the hiring, training, and field use of 14 formerly unemployed persons as home fire safety inspectors. This successful program became the model for Chicago's city-wide effort.

The Chicago Fire Department requested Federal (CETA) funding for a city-wide home inspection program in January 1977 and received the funding in June 1977. The Manpower Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor is providing \$1.39 million for one year to train 119 members of the community in conducting home inspections. The NFPCA's Public Education Office is providing technical assistance in the training program. The city-wide program is known as "Mayor Bilandic's Fire Prevention and Awareness Program" or "Operation Awareness."

After training, the inspectors begin the expanded home inspection program in the areas of fire battalions with the highest fire incident rates. After the highest rate battalions are covered, the teams move into areas with less fire loss. Bureau personnel hope to inspect all homes in each of the city's 28 fire battalions within the one-year funding cycle.

The expanded "Operation Awareness" is under the supervision of one battalion chief. A lieutenant in each of the 28 battalions

supervises the work of the CETA-paid civilians, who wear Fire Awareness uniforms. The civilian inspectors are assigned a block to cover each morning. Each evening they report their results back to the lieutenant.

REACHING CHICAGO'S CHILDREN

School children are a major target audience for fire education in Chicago. According to the Fire Prevention Bureau, special efforts are needed for children since (1) they are frequent fire victims themselves; and (2) they can help motivate their parents to fire safety. Students in grades 3-6 are seen as the primary audience, since these children are mature enough to understand safety concepts, yet young enough to be influenced by fire safety messages.

The Chicago program for children includes in-school presentations in cooperation with the Summer L. Koch Burn Center of the Cook County Hospital, children's radio programs on fire safety, a spring Clean-Up Contest in cooperation with the Chicago White Sox, and several seasonal programs.

Fireman Mike and Nurse Pat

A uniformed firefighter talking with children is a familiar sight in thousands of the Nation's schools. In Chicago, fire service and medical profession cooperation has resulted in a firefighter/nurse team who are popular classroom visitors.

Classroom presentations are an integral part of the Fire/Burn Prevention Education Programs developed jointly by Lt. Tom O'Connell of the Fire Prevention Bureau and Pat Mieszala of the Koch Burn Center. Leaders for the 45-minute classroom sessions are "Fireman Mike Kerrigan" and "Nurse Pat," both in uniform.

The program includes a slide show, narrated by the nurse, emphasizing how fire happens in an "everyday" atmosphere. "Donald's Fire Survival Plan" is introduced and shown by the firefighter, followed by class discussion.

The final half of the program calls for student participation to reinforce the fire safety messages in the slide show and film. "Nurse Pat" rolls the children on the floor to illustrate "stop-drop-and-roll." Paper flames are then taped to the student's clothing; rolling simulates extinguishing the flames.

Uniforms are helpful in education programs for children, according to Fire Prevention Bureau staff. Children are excited by uniforms. In addition, uniforms represent authority and establish credibility.

The program is the product of an advisory committee composed of representatives from the fire service, the education community, and an audio-visual expert. Now, "Fireman Mike" and "Nurse Pat" are in Chicago classrooms almost daily during the school year. During the summer months, the program is presented to more than 50 day camps of approximately 200 children

each. A slide-tape of Nurse Pat's portion of the program is available for use when she is unable to leave the hospital.

The Chicago Fire Department has found its cooperation with the medical community to be beneficial. In Chicago, the audiences for joint fire service/medical fire education programs include junior high students, high school students, and adults.

Fire Away!

Four times weekly, National Public Radio Station WBEZ opens a five-minute program beginning, "Fire Away! The Board of Education of the City of Chicago, in cooperation with the Fire Prevention Bureau of the Chicago Fire Department, presents this program as a means of helping you to prevent fires."

The announcer's questions cover a variety of fire safety skills, such as "stop-drop-and-roll," crawling through smoke, and reporting a fire. Unrehearsed answers given by Chicago elementary school students are broadcast. A fire department representative then provides additional information.

The "Fire Away!" programs offer several advantages. Repetition several times weekly reinforces the safety message. Using the children's voices to answer the question helps the children/listeners identify with the answer. Finally, the firefighter provides additional information and reinforces the correct response. The success of the "Fire Away!" program in English led to the development of parallel Spanish programming.

"Batter Up!"

Many Chicago residents, including thousands of Chicago children, are White Sox fans. The Fire Prevention Bureau channels this enthusiasm into fire prevention energy through the Spring Clean Up/Home Fire Safety Contest, co-sponsored by the Chicago White Sox.

Each year Chicago youngsters aged 10-14 compete for an evening as batboy or batgirl for a regularly scheduled White Sox game. The children complete a home clean up/safety check list, which their parents sign. The winner is selected by a drawing from all completed forms, which the children submit to the Fire Department.

Response to the contest is enormous: mailbags full of completed forms arrive at the Fire Prevention Bureau for several weeks before the yearly drawing.

Extensive local publicity contributes to the city-wide participation. The springtime announcement of the batboy/batgirl's name is widely covered in community newspapers. The winner's participation in the scheduled game also receives extensive local coverage.

Holiday Programs For Children

Each Halloween the Chicago Fire Department sponsors a safety slogan contest for elementary school students. Among the 5,000 entries in 1976 were slogans, posters, poems, and a one-act play. A committee of judges selects winners for the

\$100 bond first prize, the \$50 bond second and third prizes, and the \$25 bond fourth through eighth prizes. The local fire-fighters union annually donates the first prize, while the fire officers association, fire engineers association and other groups donate other bonds.

During the Christmas season, Santa Claus becomes a fire educator. Introduced as "Chief of the North Pole Fire Department" in a press release, Santa advises Chicago residents on holiday fire safety, including scheduling time for families to determine and practice home escape plans. A black-and-white glossy photograph of Santa Claus, standing by a fire engine and wearing a "North Pole Fire Department" chief's helmet, accompanies each press release.

OTHER SPECIAL AUDIENCES

Among the other special audiences of the Chicago Fire Prevention Bureau are the elderly, high-rise residents, and former residents of Appalachia.

Wherever possible, the Department uses existing means of communication to reach target audiences. For example, 40,000 elderly Chicago residents are the readership of Weekly Review, a newspaper "committed to the idea that age should not bar a person from being informed and effective." Twice monthly, the Weekly Review publishes a "Preventing Fires" column prepared by Fire Prevention Bureau personnel. Recent articles

have included "Bad Electric Wiring, A Hazard," "Special Problems for the Elderly," and "How Smoke Detectors Work."

To most Chicago firefighters and many Chicago residents, "3450 Lakeshore Drive" is still a reminder of a high-rise fire leading to two deaths a decade ago. This first high-rise fire in Chicago served as the impetus for an education program for the residents of other high-rise buildings.

At the time, the Fire Prevention Bureau budget did not include high-rise fire safety. The Mayor, however, agreed to fund the initial printing of "What To Do In Case of Fire In Your High-Rise Apartment Building." The brochure presents simple instructions for occupants to follow if a fire occurs in their apartment or in a nearby apartment. Later sold for 1¢ each, "What To Do" soon became the cornerstone of public education programs for apartment managers and residents.

The recent construction of the 116 story Sears Tower and other high-rise office and apartment buildings has reinforced Chicago's image as a city of skyscrapers. The programs developed after the fire at 3450 Lakeshore Drive have been updated and reprinted to meet increased demand for high-rise fire safety information.

The population of Chicago includes many former residents of Appalachia. WIND Radio broadcasts a weekly 5-minute show, "View from Uptown," which addresses the special fire problems of this audience.

GUIDELINES FOR URBAN FIRE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

1. Identifying the specific fire problem(s) to be addressed is a key component of effective urban public fire education programs.
2. Other city agencies are valuable resources for a public fire education program and can make positive contributions.
3. Programs targeted to a specific audience are more likely to result in reducing losses than a "scatter gun" approach for vague audiences.
4. When special groups of urban dwellers, such as non-English speaking residents, are the target audience, then specialized education approaches and materials will be needed.
5. Audience resistance to the fire safety message can be overcome through endorsement by respected community leaders.
6. Local media are often willing to assist in public education campaigns, especially after a local fire tragedy.
7. Ways to make the education programs ongoing should be considered. For example, "school programs" can be presented at day camps during the summer months. Especially with children, fire safety messages should be linked to memorable events in the year, such as holidays or sports activities.
8. Day-to-day monitoring of the education program highlights "trouble spots" for program modification.

CONCLUSION

For more information on public fire education in Chicago,
contact:

Chicago Fire Prevention Bureau
Chicago Fire Department
444 North Dearborn
Chicago, Illinois 60610

The education programs of the Chicago Fire Prevention Bureau
are examples of the many possible approaches to the urban fire
problem. The Public Education Office of NFPCA welcomes
receiving information about programs in other cities. Program
information may be sent to:

Public Education Office
National Fire Prevention and Control
Administration
PO Box 19518
Washington, DC 20036

NETC Library

