



Coffee Break Training - Fire Prevention and Public Education

Building Alliances Between Fire Prevention/Risk-reduction and Response

No. FM-2013-6 May 30, 2013

Learning Objective: The student shall be able to describe how fire prevention/risk-reduction leaders can build a strong alliance with their response sections.

Bureau leaders must be effective and efficient team leaders. It is important to understand the difference between leading and managing. Leadership is a dynamic process. Good leaders are visionaries who are always looking to the future of where the organization could/should be. Leaders take calculated risks and empower others with responsibility so that they can grow professionally. True leaders set good examples and inspire others to follow them.

Management is the task of ensuring a job is performed in a safe and efficient manner in accordance with prescribed operating guidelines. Those responsible for fire prevention/risk-reduction bureaus must be both leaders and managers.

It is an unwise and unhealthy practice for leaders to assume that they can operate a fire prevention/risk-reduction unit single-handedly. Regardless of the size of a prevention bureau, it is a wise strategy to build and maintain a strong alliance with the response section of the organization. This alliance serves several purposes; for example, responders learn and understand the mission of the prevention bureau. Responders can provide additional eyes to identify potential problems for referral to the prevention bureau. Responders see firsthand how prevention can enhance their personal safety by reducing hazards. Prevention bureau members can help reduce needless responses like false alarms, thus improving the availability of responders. Resource sharing will increase the overall effectiveness of the department at large.

The most effective prevention bureau leaders are those who understand the strengths and challenges of their unit/staff. Dynamic leaders will invest time to learn the interests and attributes of team members. They will help team members grow by facilitating continuing education and skill-building opportunities.

Finally, bureau leaders must be prepared to address interpersonal relationships among department members. Personnel issues are bound to arise, and effective management will help reinforce team cohesion.

Source: National Fire Academy's course, "Managing Effective Fire Prevention Programs," December 2012.

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