



Coffee Break Training - Fire Prevention and Public Education

The Five E's of Prevention — A New Approach

No. FM-2013-13 October 17, 2013

Learning Objective: The student will learn the concepts of the Five E's as they relate to fire prevention.

The most effective risk-reduction strategies are those that employ a broad-based integrated approach utilizing a combination of prevention interventions. President Harry S. Truman's 1947 conference on fire prevention coined the original Three E's — education, enforcement and engineering. In 2000, the National Fire Academy added economic incentive and emergency response because of their importance to community risk reduction. The goal of using multiple interventions in parallel is twofold: Prevent incidents from occurring, and when prevention fails, reduce or mitigate the impact of the incident. Each of the E's can contribute to the development of realistic, comprehensive and effective solutions. Together the E's produce a synergistic effect and are more effective than when used individually.

Education: Education intervention influences behavior by raising awareness, providing information and knowledge to produce the desired behavior. Education is only effective if people do what they are supposed to do, i.e., firefighters wearing seatbelts.

Enforcement: Enforcement interventions include passing, strengthening and enforcing laws as well as issuing and enforcing regulations.

Engineering: Engineering involves changes in the physical environment: the design, development and manufacture of safety products. Changes are the result of advances in technology; some examples are fire sprinklers, smoke alarms, helmets and airbags.

Economic incentive: These incentives are measures used to influence behavior either positively or negatively. Positive economic incentives reward people monetarily for behaving in a certain manner or making certain choices. Negative economic incentives punish people monetarily for behaving in a certain manner or making certain choices. Tickets, fines and citations are used to discourage people from choosing unsafe behaviors. Economic incentives can be used to persuade people to do business (sales, coupons, discounts, etc.). Government also uses economic incentives. Montgomery County, Maryland, offers a one-time 50 percent reduction in property taxes for retrofitting a home with a fire sprinkler system.

Emergency response: Emergency response interventions are used by emergency responders (fire/Emergency Medical Services/law) to mitigate risk. The emergency response capability of the community must be considered during the risk-assessment process. Some risks can only be mitigated by adding new emergency response capability or enhancing current emergency response capability. Emergency service personnel are trained and equipped to handle many emergencies; however, there are occasions when emergency services can be overwhelmed by demands. This is when a well-organized, well-managed Community Emergency Response Team can make a world of difference.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency. "Executive Analysis of Community Risk Reduction" course, December 2012.

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