



Coffee Break Training - Fire Prevention and Public Education

Supporting Fire Prevention/Community Risk Reduction

No. FM-2013-14 October 31, 2013

Learning Objective: The student shall be able to describe how a bureau leader can support fire prevention/risk reduction.

Effective leaders understand how human behavior is driven by culture. The culture of an organization influences how its members behave. The leadership of an organization is ultimately responsible for facilitating its culture. Leaders must be willing to champion the prevention mission, particularly when it may be unpopular in the remainder of the organization.

If an organization has institutionalized risk reduction as a core value, most of its members will embrace prevention activities and provide support with a professional, enthusiastic attitude. Even in an organization that supports prevention, some members may not necessarily embrace the activities they are expected to perform; however, most will do what needs to be done in a professional manner and without complaint.

Factors that contribute to institutional support of fire prevention/risk reduction include resources dedicated to prevention, staff training on why and how to deliver services, and continuous feedback on the impact of efforts. In departments where a culture supportive of prevention has not been built, there may be dissenters who speak out against performing duties and/or attempt to purposely derail risk-reduction initiatives. What can the bureau leader do to build support for fire prevention and community risk reduction?

- Seek advice and collaboration from senior leadership.
- Consider using a focus group of department members to determine the root cause of dissension.
- Consider speaking to detractors individually to obtain their perspective of the situation.
- Educate the department on the mission of the bureau and the benefits of fire prevention/risk reduction.
- Develop strategies to make the prevention bureau a respected unit within the department.

One of the main reasons why people may oppose assisting with prevention is their failure to understand the potential value of the service. The wise leader will prepare for all situations and prepare to address them accordingly. The bureau leader must be a team leader as well as a team manager. Good leaders are visionaries who are always looking to the future of where the organization could or should be. Leaders take calculated risks and empower others with responsibility so they grow professionally. True leaders set good examples and inspire others to follow. Management is the task of ensuring a job is performed in a safe and efficient manner in accordance to prescribed operating guidelines. The person responsible for a fire prevention/risk-reduction bureau must be both a leader and a manager.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, “Managing Effective Fire Prevention Programs,” December 2012.

For further information about this course, visit <http://apps.usfa.fema.gov/nfacourses/catalog/details/10502>.

For archived downloads, go to:

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