

2009 Fire Department Guide

The 2009 Fire Prevention Week (FPW) campaign provides an excellent opportunity for local fire departments to promote fire prevention and safety within their communities. The theme this year is "Stay Fire Smart! Don't Get Burned" and our focus will be on teaching families how to prevent the leading causes of home fires – cooking, heating, electrical, and smoking materials. Follow these tips for a successful Fire Prevention Week campaign in your community.

Working with Schools

Involvement and support from schools are essential for successful use and distribution of Fire Prevention Week materials.

- Make schools aware of the exciting upcoming Fire Prevention Week campaign by contacting school principals and teachers early. Provide them with an article for their September school newsletter, a take home letter for parents or consider delivering a brief Fire Prevention Week presentation at a staff or principals' meeting.
- In some communities it may be possible for departments to visit each participating classroom personally to deliver FPW materials. Personal contact with students provides an opportunity to expand and enhance fire safety messages, and helps ensure that program materials are used in the classroom and taken home for parental involvement. If your department is unable to visit each classroom, meet with the school's principal to discuss the best strategy for distributing Fire Safety Starts with You! activity booklets.
- Customize the *Teacher Letter* and *Family Letter* with your department's letterhead. Make sufficient copies of each to ensure that each participating classroom teacher receives one of each.
- Make sufficient copies of the *Teacher Lesson Plan* to ensure that each participating classroom teacher receives one. The lesson plan provides teachers with suggestions on how to make effective use of the Fire Safety Starts with You! activity booklet.
- Distribute FPW materials to schools by the middle of September to provide teachers sufficient time to gear up for FPW activities.
- Remind teachers that students completing the Fire Safety Starts with You! activity booklet can enter to win a laptop computer. The school of the winning student will receive a \$500.00 cash prize from the Office of the Fire Commissioner, to be used for special educational activities and/or supplies. More details about the computer contest and school prize are included in this kit.
- Encourage participation and return of contest entry forms by organizing competitions between classrooms or between schools.

Ensure success with your school program this Fire Prevention Week by rewarding teachers! Invite your schools to compete for the honour of having lunch with Firefighters. The school with the highest completion of Fire Safety Starts with You! activity booklets wins!

Encourage your schools to participate in a district-wide fire drill during Fire Prevention Week. Schools have many new students each year and are required to conduct fire drills throughout the school year. Add further incentive by offering prizes for participation! A sample letter to schools and school fire drill checklist has been included in this kit.

Working with the Media

Fire Prevention Week is an excellent time to work with the local media (radio, television, magazines and newspapers) to deliver and promote your fire prevention and safety messages. Follow these tips to help facilitate partnerships with your local media.

- Make personal contact with your local media representatives well in advance of Fire Prevention Week to educate them about the importance of fire prevention and life safety education.
- Provide the media with a schedule of all your FPW events. Follow-up by calling media contacts and building their interest in the campaign. Provide them with public story ideas, safety announcements, statistics, fire safety tips and graphics. Visit the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) website at www.firepreventionweek.org to download ready to use news releases and camera ready Sparky Spots (PSAs).
- Invite the media to join your department's Fire Prevention Week Kick Off! Encourage media participation by holding contests, offering prizes and/or recognizing their efforts by making them a Fire Prevention Week Safety Star!

The media often wants an interesting angle or theme for their stories. Identify those topics or issues you want to educate your community about, and then consider possible story ideas for the media around those issues. Some possible story ideas include:

- role of the fire department in the community
- smoke alarm audibility with children
- how people respond in a fire emergency
- local fire incidents and lessons learned
- facts about smoke alarms – photoelectric vs. ionization (for interesting smoke alarm facts reference websites such as www.nfpa.org and www.fiprecan.ca).

Work with your local newspaper to create a Fire Prevention Week supplement section. Encourage the newspaper to sell advertising spots for the supplement to cover costs, and in return provide them with content for the supplement. Some theme options for the supplement may include:

- A Salute to Firefighters
- Fire Prevention – A Community Responsibility
- Our Community Fire Service – Forestry and the Fire Department.

Contents may include:

- letter from the fire chief
- photos (or provide photo opportunities for media to take their own photos)
- Firefighter editorials highlighting different halls
- fire safety quiz or home hazard checklist
- colouring page for kids.

Community Events and Activities

This year make Fire Prevention Week a community event! Setting up a community event can be simple and fun to do and it provides an excellent opportunity to profile your fire department. Make your event fun and interactive and remember to involve local businesses, community officials and the media.

Activities

1. Community-wide Fire Drill

Holding a community-wide fire drill is a great way to motivate positive behaviour change to reduce the risk of death from fire in your community. It also serves as a good media hook, helping to raise your fire department's profile and reinforce the important role of public safety education in saving lives.

Have residents in your municipality develop their own home escape plans and practice them with the rest of the community at a specific time. At the pre-arranged time, sound the fire hall alarm(s) or other signal to alert the community that the drill has begun. Keep your fire hall open to the public in order to celebrate with the families who took part in the drill.

2. Fire Department Open House

An open house at the fire hall can provide an excellent opportunity to educate the public about fire safety as well as the varied activities and community service of the fire department. Turn your traditional fire hall open house into a "Family Night" for the entire family. Make your open house an interactive experience by creating activity stations for the community to participate in. Possible activities include:

- fire hall tours
- smoke alarms (purpose, placement and maintenance)
- fire extinguisher demonstrations
- junior firefighter obstacle course
- hose demonstrations
- turn-out gear demonstrations
- crawl low under smoke / stop, drop and roll.

3. Community Smoke Alarm Installation Program

A smoke alarm installation program is an excellent way to reach the high-risk residents in your community in order to teach them about the importance of smoke alarms, their proper placement, testing, maintenance and replacement. Begin your program by targeting high-risk residents in your community such as seniors.

4. Fire and Life Safety Displays

Organize fire and life safety displays and booths at local malls, schools, and community halls. Use this opportunity to educate the public about important life saving messages, such as the importance of smoke alarms in providing an early warning of smoke and fire, home fire escape plans, home hazards and general fire prevention tips. You may want to provide smoke alarms and batteries as draw prizes throughout the event.

5. Fire and Life Safety Fairs

A fire and life safety fair provides fire departments with an opportunity to interact with their community through participation in fun and exciting activities. It can serve as a great occasion to recognize and thank community members who have contributed to fire and life safety throughout the past year. Invite school representatives, the media and of course the mayor! In addition to activities, remember to offer food and refreshments. And don't forget to invite Sparky! Possible fire and life safety fair activities include:

- auto extrication demonstrations
- smoke house shows
- interactive learning stations
- fire safety house
- hose and target competitions
- junior firefighter obstacle course.

You may want to set up a fire and life safety fair specifically for your local school aged children. Work with your schools to coordinate the event. Ensure activities are age appropriate, interactive and fun!

Fundraising

Local business leaders are important to a successful public safety campaign. Provide sponsors with suggestions for how they can support your Fire Prevention Week campaign such as:

- display FPW banners and posters in offices, windows and outside storefronts
- pass out fire and life safety materials and FPW advertisements to customers and clients
- provide space for events and activities
- donate prizes, products and materials
- donate money
- local media can donate airtime
- donate volunteer time.

When seeking sponsorship:

- Start early. A successful fundraising effort takes time.
- Develop a list of potential sponsors and participants. Be sure to include organizations that are associated with safety.
- Develop a budget for your campaign and a 'wish list' of supplies, refreshments, and fire safety materials. By developing a wish list of supplies, you can help sponsors identify the items that will be most valuable to you.
- Find ways to provide credit to your sponsors for their help, such as adding logos to handouts and giving acknowledgement in news releases.
- When asking for sponsorship, consider sending a letter. Be specific about what you need and how you will give credit to their organization. Help them understand why safety is important and how the campaign will positively affect the community and their organization. Be prepared to answer questions about where their funding will be used and listen carefully to what they want to contribute as they may offer something that you hadn't thought of.

Visit the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) website at www.firepreventionweek.org for more fundraising suggestions.