



## **Presentation Title: Community Risk Reduction Through School Partnerships**

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### **I. Formative Evaluation – Planning**

- Children are at-risk for fire-related death and injury. Those in lower socio-economic conditions are high-risk due to older home construction, smoking and alcohol use, and other factors.
- In 2005:
  - US Census Bureau and The University of Alabama’s Center for Economic Research recorded Tuscaloosa’s oldest residential construction and poorest residents in West End and Alberta. The residents most likely to be children, single parents or older adults.
  - Informal assessment and department-based data (NFIRS, Firehouse) revealed majority of reported fires and fire fatalities occurred in West End and Alberta (East).
  - The Tuscaloosa Fire and Rescue Service established PROJECT F.I.R.E. (Fire and Injury Reduction Education), a community risk reduction program targeting these high-risk neighborhoods. *For the purposes of this presentation, we will focus only on the “E” of Education, school partnerships.*
- The goal of Project FIRE is to reduce fires and injuries in Tuscaloosa. An objective of that goal is to establish a partnership with four elementary schools – two in Alberta and two in West End. The purposes of that objective are to:
  - Increase fire and life safety education (FLSE) opportunities for students and teachers.
  - Increase FLSE knowledge among parents and caregivers by educating children.
  - Use social marketing practices to seek to influence behavior.
  - Engage firefighters in fire prevention.

### **II. Process Evaluation – Implementation**

- A Fire and Life Safety Education Committee determined that year-round fire and life safety messages in the four high-risk elementary schools could affect behavior change.
- Change from a one-size-fits-all approach of reactive presentations to a proactive, targeted program.
- From 2005 – 2013, provided eight lessons per year to approximately 6,000 students.

### **III. Impact Evaluation – Short Term Results**

Students: Correctly review/demonstrate lesson materials.

Acknowledge “their” firefighters in the community, even in street clothing.

School Teachers/Administrators:

Report improved/positive opinions of fire dept.

Reinforce lessons between firefighter visits.

Extended Community/Parents:

Increased invitations to community, school events in West End and Alberta.

Increased participation in free smoke alarm inspections/installations.

TFRS:

Maximize resources for maximum benefit.

Fosters changing role of firefighter as a fire preventer.

Acknowledgement of firefighters as positive role models and neighborhood partners.

### **IV. Outcome Evaluation – Long Term Results**

- Fire incidence dropped 28.34% between 2006 and 2013.
- ZERO fire deaths in the targeted communities in 2009 and 2010.
- ZERO fire deaths in Tuscaloosa in 2011, 2012 and 2013.
- Student experienced home kitchen fire. In absence of mother, directed other children to exit home and gather at mailbox to dial 911.
- Exposure for diversity recruitment. Former student enrolled in high school firefighting curriculum reports earlier influence by firefighters’ school visits.

#### **Recommendations for others:**

- Fire chief should make prevention a true priority.
- Establish FLSE committee to support buy-in and guide decision-making.
- Treat each teaching opportunity as unique opportunity.
- Be on time. Respect school rules. Be appreciative of the opportunity.