



MySafe:LA

Jr. Fire Inspector Program

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I. Formative Evaluation – Planning

Los Angeles suffers from an unacceptable fire fatality rate, notably in residences that are either out of code compliance, overcrowded, or legal but based on age at increased fire risk. On average over the past three years, 20 people a year have died in structure fires in L.A. Out of 63 recent fatalities, only two residences had smoke alarms, and neither of those were functional.

Of the 63 recent fatalities, more than 60% involved older adults, and 15% involved minors. 80% + of these fatalities involved lower income families.

Via review of NFIRS reports, structure fire responses, and arson reporting, specific areas of concern were identified within the greater Los Angeles City boundaries. Three specific fire battalions were reviewed, including spot inspections, and interaction with elementary schools. A key factor in this review process was noting the limited access provided to anyone in uniform, due in part to the potential for eviction, fines, or other legal measures.

Our team determined that the best method for reaching these at-risk homes was through an education program aimed at 4th and 5th grade students.

- 3-visit per school program to train students to become “Jr. Fire Inspectors!”
- School lessons designed to educate and motivate students to inspect their homes for fire risks
- Specific focus on family escape planning, smoke alarms, and prevention
- Post-course testing, evaluation, and analysis

Although access to these students is often challenging due to California testing and school certification (i.e. schedules are packed), MySafe:LA received remarkable support from LAUSD principals throughout the areas identified for the program (based on local risk data fire battalions).

Once the at-risk communities were identified (south, central, and northwest L.A.), specific objectives were established:

- Minimum 1,000 “graduate” Jr. Fire Inspectors
- Minimum 500 smoke alarm deliveries and “pledges” of active use

Our development team focused on creation of appropriate educational content, utilizing nationally recognized methods, but modified to be presented in a localized manner that would be easily identifiable by students. Critical to the success of the program was implementation of specific “L.A.” messaging and materials. These materials include:

- Extensive use of media, including video, photographs, and web content
- Jr. Fire Inspector I.D cards, emulating the style of LA City I.D. cards
- Print materials, with high quality design, messaging, and evaluation

II. Process Evaluation – Implementation

During the initial phase of the program, 36 schools were visited, with an average attendance of 46 students per class (1,656 students total). A minimum of two instructors per class delivered the three visit program.

Home inspections were managed as homework, with an 85% initial return rate (general homework return rate was 55%). Pre-Testing was conducted with all students. Post testing conducted with 12 schools (33%). First-in (first due) fire companies participated in “I.D.” graduation presentations.

III. Impact Evaluation – Short Term Results

Phase One results were significant, including:

- 1,489 graduated Junior Fire Inspectors
- 1,280 smoke alarms/batteries distributed (to homes without any)
- 205 9-volt batteries distributed to homes with alarms

IV. Outcome Evaluation – Long Term Results

Evaluation is ongoing. No long term (multi-year) results are yet available. Student retention after six months is 88% (based on a 64% test score baseline). Status of smoke alarms is in progress. 2013 fire fatality rate for Los Angeles remains unchanged. Note that within the targeted intervention areas, fatality fire reporting was reduced by 50% in two of three fire battalions. Multi-year evaluation is required to determine true changes in outcomes.

Key Metric: *More than 1,000 smoke alarms were introduced into home that did not previously have one. More than 200 non-functional smoke alarms were made active via introduction of new batteries.*