



Presentation Title: Growing Resilient Communities

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Community Resiliency Pilot Project - November 23, 2013

Over the course of 20 months the city of Sioux Falls experienced 9 fire related fatalities. In each incident the residence had no working smoke alarms. Community leaders decided to take action to address this issue. In August of 2013, after the city of Sioux Falls experienced its ninth fatality in 20 months where there were no working smoke alarms in the residence, it was decided it was time to take action by convening community discussions.

New Framework for Preparedness

Organizations like the American Red Cross have been distributing information on preparedness for years, yet the majority of Americans remain underprepared and at risk should a disaster occur. According to FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), only 33% of US citizens have participated in a preparedness drill at work, school, or home in the past 2 years. Less than half of US citizens have a household emergency plan. In a recent NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) survey, only 33% of Americans have developed and practiced a fire escape plan. In national per capita comparisons, the Midwest has the most fires and the most civilian fire deaths and injuries.

What is Resilience? Resilience is built by strengthening a community's physical, psychological, social, and economic capacity. The American Red Cross proposed a new approach to building resiliency. The strategy brings people together to discuss the community's preparedness needs and foster strong connections among the American Red Cross, residents, businesses, non-profit organizations, the faith based community, and government. Working with partners, the American Red Cross brought attention to local preparedness needs with the goal of preventing more injuries and deaths.

"Silent Disasters"

Out of the 70,000 disaster calls the American Red Cross responds to across the nation annually, 65,000 of those disasters are related to fire, the "silent disaster." NFPA states in 62% of home fire deaths there was no working smoke alarm in the house. 75% of fires are preventable. Each year, home fires impact more people than any other disaster. Of the approximately 65,000 disasters American Red Cross responds to related to fire, 80% of those are families below the poverty line. Children, low income families, and rural communities tend to suffer the effects of fire disproportionately.

Prevention & Preparedness

At the American Red Cross we believe that prevention efforts, like installing state-of-the-art smoke alarms in homes, open the door to discussions about preparedness education. By engaging the community to prevent the "Silent Disaster" we will empower residents to discuss other immediate actions they can take to build their own resiliency and that of their community, encouraging education into immediate action and obtaining measurable results.

The goal of the Growing Resilient Sioux Falls event was to build community resiliency through one-on-one discussions with families in their homes. 30% of the 1,500 homes we approached opened their doors and welcomed us in. Our teams installed state-of-the-art smoke alarms which provide 10 years of protection without having to change batteries. While fire fighters installed the alarms, American Red Cross volunteers educated and empowered citizens to prepare for many types of disasters such as winter weather, tornadoes, and flooding. Teams performed free blood pressure for resident's checks to build individual resiliency. Over one third of the pressures checked were high.

Other goals:

- Obtain a home by home assessment of the neighborhood
- Bring up awareness of prevention and preparedness through large scale public awareness campaign prior to event

- Reduce the number of injuries and deaths over the long term
- Secure a baseline to measure future Growing Resilient successes

Pre and post evaluations were developed by subject matter experts and vetted through the steering committee. Volunteers received training before and during the event. Trained volunteers took blood pressures and provided appropriate direction for follow up.

II. Process Evaluation – Implementation

American Red Cross, partnered with the City of Sioux Falls, Sioux Falls Fire Rescue, City of Sioux Falls Public Health, 10 corporate partners and many community leaders, formed a steering committee and stood up the “Growing Resilient - Sioux Falls” pilot project, a one day canvass of the Sioux Falls’ Whittier Neighborhood consisting of 1,500 homes and has the highest concentration of fires, injuries and fatalities as documented by Sioux Falls Fire Rescue.

The steering committee used the Incident Command System to provide the framework; creating the organizational structure which could be scaled to size considering variables such as number of volunteers, donations, etc. An Incident Action Plan (IAP) was also developed through the process to increase situational awareness.

To date numbers:

- Over 30 percent of homes opened their doors to the volunteers
- 45 homes had no smoke alarms in the home
- More than 130 smoke alarms were installed
- More than 60 blood pressure checks were performed
- More than 1,000 disaster preparedness kits were left at doorsteps where no one was home

Resources used:

- 117 American Red Cross volunteers and fire fighters canvassed homes
- Partners and sponsors committed \$8,000 of monetary support and \$20,000 of in-kind support, which covered project costs including:
 - Printed materials distributed and smoke alarms installed in neighborhood canvassing
 - T-shirts, meals, and snacks for 117 volunteers and partners on the day of the canvassing event
 - Support for a public relations blitz, including a PSA dedicated to the project, direct mailer, an automated call from the school district, and social media
- Over 1,500 volunteer hours tracked

III. Impact Evaluation – Short Term Results

Increased conversation in community continues. At this point, we know the immediate results as quantified above. Further evaluation will be done as we move forward.

IV. Outcome Evaluation – Long Term Results

The success of this program and others like it within the American Red Cross network has helped create momentum for the American Red Cross to take this concept to scale in the form of a predictable and repeatable program that can be applied consistently across the country. The American Red Cross desires to help lead a broad, nationwide coalition to dramatically reduce losses from home fires.

Recommendations for others:

Begin conversations with American Red Cross field network offices around the nation. Work with other active community stakeholders.

Conclusions:

Continue to seek the greatest impact by changing behaviors though pairing empowering education and smoke alarm installation in homes which will strengthen individual and community resiliency and lead to saved lives and reduced suffering.