



Presentation Title: Fire Safety and Burn Prevention: A Newspaper In Education Program

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Program/Project Overview:

The Illinois Fire Safety Alliance (IFSA) is a state-wide organization established in 1982. The IFSA's mission statement is to bring together persons or groups with a common interest in fire safety, burn prevention and public education, and to promote programs and disseminate information related to fire safety and burn prevention. The Illinois Fire Safety Alliance, the Chicago Sun-Times, ComEd, and the National Fire Sprinkler Association have created a unique educational partnership, designed to expand and support the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance's effort to educate young people on the importance of fire safety and burn prevention. This past October celebrated the 10th anniversary of our unique partnership and educational efforts which have reached millions of young people and Chicago Sun-Times readers over the years.

Program goals:

- To present a hands-on fire safety and burn prevention program to students in elementary schools (public, private and parochial) throughout the state of Illinois
- To disseminate the fire safety and burn prevention information to students, their families and all readers of the Chicago Sun-Times not only during the annual celebration of Fire Prevention Week, but each week throughout the month of October, for a total of five weeks.
- To provide young people an opportunity to share what they have learned about the importance of fire safety and burn prevention in writing via an annual student essay contest on the subject.
- To provide fire service personnel with an educational tool they can take into classrooms and their communities as they educate the public on the need for fire safety and burn prevention.
- And most importantly, to ultimately reduce the number of young people and families who suffer the tragic consequences of a fire which in most cases could have been prevented.
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Formative Evaluation (Needs/Risk Assessment):

The Illinois Fire Safety Alliance is a statewide organization, whose goals and objectives are to present their educational programs to youth across the state. Because children are the most at risk group to become a fire casualty, IFSA's focus and ongoing challenge was to identify ways to bring their message to young people throughout Illinois. Ten years ago, the Chicago Sun-Times presented an opportunity to uniquely expand the outreach of IFSA's message through their Newspaper In Education program. Copies of the Chicago Sun-Times were distributed primarily to fourth-grade students/classes across the state. Additionally, teachers sent the newspapers home with their students to share the weekly fire safety and burn prevention messages at home.

Program Description:

- 8-page special Fire Safety and Burn Prevention section for students was created, produced and distributed in all editions of the Chicago Sun-Times, Thurs., Oct. 8, 2009.
- Weekly School Page produced each week (5) focusing on Fire Safety and Burn Prevention message with a weekly distribution of classroom copies.
- Fire departments across the state received an on-line version or newspaper delivery in conjunction with the program going out to schools in their communities.
- All public libraries throughout the state of Illinois were provided information and an on-line link to the program enabling participation outside of the immediate classroom.
- Extensive pre-promotion was done via multiple faxes and direct calls to schools.
- New this year was an on-line component featuring the full 8-page section, the weekly School Page and a link to the IFSA website from the Chicago Sun-Times' site.

Program Impact:

- More than 500,000 students throughout Illinois participated.
- The program reached more than 2,700 public, private and parochial schools in Illinois.
- Approximately 1,200 fire departments across the state participated.
- The program went out to more than 1.2 million Sun-Times readers each week.

Outcome:

- The new on-line feature this year proved a valuable asset to expanding access to the program across the state and in institutions other than local schools.
- Sponsors, such as ComEd and the National Fire Sprinkler Association continue to support the program through funding and additional resources.
- Comments received from educators each year strongly endorse the program for its timeliness during Fire Prevention Month, the creative educational lessons tied into the message and the opportunity it gives educators to reach out to families.

Conclusions:

Although we are not able to specifically track how many fires are prevented or lives are saved as a direct result of IFSA's Fire Safety and Burn Prevention Newspaper In Education Program, we do know that hundreds of thousands of students each year are exposed to the message, and are taking the message home to their parents, grandparents and other family members. Thousands of smoke alarms are being checked, changed and even purchased because a child has brought home the fire safety checklist found in that day's newspaper. The ultimate goal, however, is to reduce the number of children attending the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance's annual "Camp I Am Me," a weeklong summer camp experience for children who have been a victim of a fire, which in most cases, if not all, could have been prevented through education.