Art and Science of Creating Prevention Culture in FD and City Councils

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Spring Lake Park – Blaine – Mounds View (MN) Fire Department
Goals

• To be Efficient
  – Cost Per Capita
  – Low Injury Rate for FF

• To be Effective
  – Reduce Calls and measure Per Capita
  – Reduction in Fires (focus on structure)
  – Comprehensive all hazard approach
    • Fire, Falls, Bike Safety, Auto Safety (children), etc.
FORMATIVE EVALUATION

SBM Master Plan.ppt
• Research – National, State, Local
  – Call volume and type of calls
    • Focus on alarms and fires
      – Close to 50% of calls were alarms or good intent
  – Injuries
    • Average of more than 9 per year in 1995, now 2.3
  – What others were doing
    • Mostly international, very little domestic findings
  – Risk Assessment
    • Led to staffing plan
Obtained Council/Board Support

• Substantive Research
• Production and Presentation of a Written Plan
• Recognition and Statement that Suppression is a costly and ineffective solution
• Rebalance of resources
Process

- Conduct research, communicate findings, develop plan
- Hire prevention volunteers
- Hire fire inspectors
- Implement changes to emergency response
- Refocus hiring – quality vs. quantity
- Institutionalize prevention advocacy
Evaluation

• Prevention Staff
  – 1 full time, 4 fire life safety educators, 2 permanent part time, 6-10 Fire Corps
  – From 2 full time to 7 full time inspectors
  – 19 Prevention Programs

• Investigation Division
  – Internal SBM Team
  – Part of County Team also
IMPACT EVALUATION
Measurable Outcomes

• Juvenile Fire Problem
  – 80% reduction in referrals

• Sprinklers
  – All educational property (18 – 2 Senior High, 3 Middle and 13 Elementary Schools)
  – All townhomes
  – All high hazards
  – Zero interest sprinkler loan program

• Code Adoption and Enforcement
  – All high hazards yearly (includes assembly and multi-family)
  – All others on 3 to 5 year rotation
OUTCOME EVALUATION

2010 FRI Presentation Final.pptx
• Call volume decreased 28% when adjusted for population, 39.5% when adjusted for market value growth.

• Lowest per capita fire expense for any similar size department (down to 30,000 population) in State of Minnesota.

• Injuries
  – From 9 per year to 2.3 per year (despite increase in activity)

• Commercial Fire Incidence
  – Negligible – 1 to 2 sprinkler controlled events per year

• Multi-Family Fire Incidence
  – Negligible – Zero incidents in last decade

• Manufactured Home Fires
  – From 30+ a year to less than 5 per year

• Community acceptance/embracement

• Increased activity amongst suppression members
RECOMMENDATIONS

Change the Environment
Environment - Councils/Managers

• Are looking for change
  – Fire Departments are/can be:
    • Costly and inefficient
    • Political animals

• Recognize
  – You can balance prevention and emergency response
  – Discontinue something and use savings to fund prevention activity
Environment - Crew

• Suppression/Response Crew
  – Crews “embrace/love” not going to alarms
  – Exchange “fire calls” for high quality training
  – Add value to the “job” by providing rewarding positive experiences

• Prevention (Suppression or Prevention Hire)
  – Valued same as suppression
  – Experiences can be equally as rewarding
Environment - Evaluate

• Evaluate and make changes
  – If it is not working or meeting the established objective – STOP
  – True for suppression or prevention activities
  – This includes exchanging quantity for quality whenever and wherever possible – more is not better. Better is Better.
Change Examples & Outcome

• Changes
  – Reduced response crew from 93 volunteers to 55
  – Consolidated two stations into new one
  – Hired prevention volunteers
  – Hire full time and permanent part time prevention staff
  – Changed alarm response to duty chief
  – Working structure fires – first rig on red until confirmed, all others routine
  – All members considered firefighters
  – Prevention Chief same level rank as Operations and Training Chief
  – Fire Corps

• Outcomes
  – New $7.1 million station
  – 10 Full time staff
  – Five new engines in last 5 years
  – One budget reduction (3% in last five years) and 2.3% increase for 2012