

Category 5

Criterion 5B: Public Education Program

A public education program is in place and directed toward reducing community risks in a manner consistent with the agency's mission and as identified within the community risk assessment and standards of cover. The agency should conduct a thorough risk analysis as part of activities in Category 2 to determine the need for a specific public education program.

Summary:

The Meridian Fire Department's public education program is part of the department's Community Risk Reduction division. The public education program's goal is to reduce the risk to the community from fire and EMS related emergencies through education, outreach, prevention programs, and partnerships. The public education program provides a variety of services from smoke detector checks, home inspections, fall prevention education for seniors, K-12 educational partnerships, CPR and first aid programs, car seat installation and inspections, to juvenile fire setter intervention. The use of the department's many programs has steadily increased over the years as the size of the city has also grown. The department's smoke detector service prevents many service calls from reaching front-line, emergency fire engines, helping to ensure that appropriate apparatus are available for calls. Countless other emergencies have been prevented through the public education programs efforts. The program is increasing their use of data to help target programs based on both national trends and local statistics.

Performance Indicators:

CC 5B.1 The public education program targets specific risks, behaviors and audiences identified through incident, demographic and program data analysis and the community risk assessment/standards of cover.

Description

The department's public education program adopts a forward-thinking and preemptive strategy when it comes to public injury prevention and fire safety education. The program uses a combination of internal and external data to effectively assess and create programs. To determine high-risk groups within the community, the program analyzes various data sources, including department incident reports, city, county, state, and national statistics, and the *Meridian Fire Department Community Risk Assessment/Standards of Cover*. By focusing on specific incident types (such as falls or faulty smoke detector calls), the division can pinpoint high-risk groups and neighborhoods that require targeted education. As a result of their findings, the program takes various proactive measures to ensure community safety. The public education program conducts smoke detector sweeps in 55 and over communities, offers in-home inspections, and provides fall prevention education to seniors. The program also works with local area schools to provide adaptive smoke detectors to hearing impaired individuals. When the fire investigators find evidence of multiple intentionally set fires in a given area, the public education program can provide door hangers to neighborhoods with information and resources.

Appraisal

The department's public education program has conducted smoke detector sweeps in 55 and over communities for several years now. Recently the department began partnering with Domino's pizza to provide in-home smoke detector checks. The department has used an internal data tracking system to track smoke detector checks and replacements and home inspection visits, and has seen an increasing use of the program annually. The program also recently worked with the fire marshal to identify a large number of new apartments under construction, and began an apartment fire safety program and provided education and door hangers to a large number of apartment complexes in the Meridian area. The program has relied on data provided to them through national statistics and crew

anecdotes. The department recently hired a community risk reduction (CRR) specialist to assist in using data to better target the department's programs.

Plan

The newly hired community risk reduction specialist will use data and coordinate with the city's GIS department to pinpoint focus areas in the city for certain prevention measures such as falls, smoke detector issues, kitchen/appliance fires, etc. The department will analyze potential software to assist in this effort, including the new Craig 1300 program from the National Fire Protection Association. The department will continue to partner with schools to offer adaptive smoke detectors for hearing impaired individuals, and continue to offer its many preventive programs such as smoke detector sweeps, fall prevention classes, and door hangers.

References

- Fairways Smoke Alarm Sweep Donations
- Apartment Fire Safety Handout
- Apartment List
- Project "Smoke Alarms for Everyone" Hearing-Impaired Smoke Alarm Award

CC 5B.2 The program has adequate staff with specific expertise to address identified risks and meet the public education program goals, objectives.

Description

The public education program currently employees a community risk reduction division manager, a public education and prevention specialist, and a community risk reduction specialist. The public education program manages multiple programs including smoke detector checks and installations, school fire safety programs, a public safety academy, youth fire setter intervention, car seat installations, community CPR classes, senior fall prevention, and many other initiatives. On duty personnel also assist the public education program by providing smoke detector checks and installations. In addition, half of the department’s line personnel are certified car seat technicians and can complete scheduled and unscheduled car seat inspections. Currently the program’s staff members are able to handle all current programs and initiatives but are unable to expand programs further or add new programs.

Appraisal

The current staff has been able to meet the public education needs of the Meridian community. The department completed a community risk assessment and standards of cover to help provide the community risk reduction roadmap to determine the future educational priorities for the department. Meridian’s population has increased dramatically over the last ten years, leading to both an increase in demands for services and a change in the services needed. The department recently hired a community risk reduction specialist to provide more in-depth data analysis to assist with better targeting programs so that the department can use its current resources more effectively.

Plan

The public education program will utilize the new community risk reduction specialist to help target programs. Using insights and data, the program will be able to better target specific risks and hot spots so that the program’s personnel can better use and target their time. The department will continue to track and monitor the utilization of the smoke detector installation program to evaluate if additional personnel are needed to expand the

program. The department will investigate the possibility of adding part time or volunteers to help support the public education programs as well.

References

- Community Risk Reduction Division Manager Job Description
- Community Risk Reduction Specialist Job Description
- Public Education and Prevention Specialist Job Description
- Car Seat Technician List

5B.3 Programs are in place to identify large loss potential or high-risk audiences (such as low socio-economic status, age and cultural/ethnic differences, where appropriate), forge partnerships with those who serve those constituencies, and enable specified programs to mitigate fires and other emergency incidents (such as home safety visits, smoke alarm installations, free bicycle helmet programs, fall prevention programs, etc.).

Description

The department's public education program has successfully forged a number of partnerships to help provide education to a variety of audiences including non-native English-speaking groups, children, seniors, and low-income areas. The department partners with the Idaho Transportation Department to provide free car seats to families in need. The program receives grants from the Idaho Fire Chiefs Association for youth education materials and youth fire setter programs. The department has received donations from First Alert of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to install in homes, as well as hearing-impaired smoke detectors for hearing-impaired or deaf residents. When residents call for smoke detector checks or battery installation they are also offered a free home inspection and fall prevention check.

Appraisal

The public education program has evaluated the effectiveness of its programs through attendance tracking, surveys, feedback forms, and pre- and post- educational event verbal quizzes. Car seat installations also require that technicians check off caregivers on proper installation of a car seat. Overall the department has seen an increase in the usage of the programs year over year. During smoke detector installations in senior homes, employees ensure that residents understand how to properly test their smoke detectors and understand how to interpret the different beeps or alarm sounds.

Plan

The department will continue to partner with community groups and vendors to provide services to the community. The community risk reduction division manager will use data from the new community risk reduction specialist to seek out new partnerships in identified risk behaviors or physical locations. The public education program will work

with the training division to provide better guidelines to line duty personnel on how to conduct in home safety visits and smoke detector training for seniors.

References

- Monthly Donated Car Seat Report
- Idaho Fire Chiefs Education Grant
- First Alert Smoke Detector Donations
- Project “Smoke Alarms for Everyone” Hearing-Impaired Smoke Alarm Award

CC 5B.4 The agency conducts a formal and documented program appraisal, at least annually, to determine the program’s impacts and outcomes, and to measure performance and progress in reducing risk.

Description

The department conducts annual program appraisals according to administrative standard operating guidelines. The department measures the public education program’s performance based on its budget usage, community outreach and contact statistics, and program feedback.

Appraisal

The department has previously evaluated the performance of the public education program and community risk reduction division annually in the form of annual reports. The department public education programs reached 60,499 community members through a total of 512 events and requests for service. The program hosted 35 Hands-Only CPR events (5,670 instructed), 32 CPR certification events (187 certifications), 8 first aid courses (45 certifications), 122 safety presentations, and 124 school events. A total of 667 smoke alarms and 46 CO alarms were replaced, with the department providing 135 and 10 free replacements, respectively. The car seat program accounted for 320 child safety seat checks and installations, with the department providing a total of 57 free seats to families.

Plan

The department will continue to conduct annual program appraisals of the public education program in accordance with administrative standard operating guidelines. The program’s goals are to implement a data driven community risk reduction plan using a community risk reduction specialist for data analysis, implement new software from the National Fire Protection Agency to provide better insight into risks, frequencies, and locations, provide more documented training to the department’s line personnel on how to provide on scene community risk reduction, and continue to successfully operate the department’s many public safety initiatives.

References

- Annual Program Appraisal_5B.4 PubEd

- ASOG – Program Appraisals