



Fire is
Everyone's
Fight TM

Community Outreach Guide

U.S. Fire
Administration



FEMA

Overview

Fire is Everyone's Fight™ is a national effort led by the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) to lower the number of home fires and home fire injuries in America. Along with USFA and partner organizations across the country, the fire community is speaking out with a unified message of fire prevention and safety to the public. The goal is to change how people think about fire and fire prevention using social marketing strategies to address the broadest possible audience.

As firefighters and emergency responders, you work every day to keep our families and homes safe. Fire is Everyone's Fight™ not only supports your vital mission to protect lives and property, but it also seeks to keep you and the men and women you serve with safer as well. As you and thousands of other members of the fire and emergency services community across the country spread Fire is Everyone's Fight™ to your communities, people will begin to recognize and understand the importance of taking small steps to make their homes and families safer from fire.

There are dozens of ways you can use Fire is Everyone's Fight™ to help teach people in your city or town to be safer. This guide shares just a few ideas to help you get started. It offers suggestions for engaging people in the community. This guide will help you:

- Integrate Fire is Everyone's Fight™ content into your existing media and community outreach programs.
- Reach out to organizations to arrange speaking opportunities.
- Use social media to get the word out about fire safety and prevention.
- Know what to say and how to say it simply and effectively.
- Put together an event that attracts the audience you want to inform.
- Create opportunities to get the word out.

We hope you will use this guide as a springboard to find creative ways to spread the word about Fire is Everyone's Fight™ and the important messages of preventing home fires and fire risks in your community. Together, we can help reduce the number of deaths, injuries and property losses across the country, and in the process, we will keep you and your fellow firefighters and emergency responders out of harm's way.

Table of Contents

1 Community Outreach

- 1 Finding and Creating Educational Opportunities
- 2 Examples of Educational Opportunities
- 3 Utilizing Social Media to Engage with the Public

5 What to Say and How to Say It

- 5 Tips for Making Content Easier to Read
- 11 Adapting and Delivering the Message

15 Core Messages

- 15 Core Cooking Messages
- 17 Core Smoke Alarm Messages
- 19 Core Messages for Caregivers of Babies and Toddlers
- 20 Core Messages for Older Adults
- 23 Core Smoking Messages

25 Working with the Media

- 25 The Interview Request
- 27 Ideas for Getting the Media Involved

29 Resources

- 29 Fire is Everyone's Fight™ Graphic Use
- 31 Fire is Everyone's Fight™ Outreach Materials and Educational Programs

32 We Want to Hear from You

Finding and Creating Educational Opportunities

With all your other responsibilities around the fire station, it can be a bit challenging to think about going out and speaking to people about fire safety. Here are some tips on how to reach out to your community and find opportunities to tell people about Fire is Everyone's Fight™.



Identify your audience.

Deciding whom you want to talk to is the first and most important step. This will help guide your next steps. Do you want to reach parents? Low-income families? Older adults? Review the number and types of fires happening in your community, and think about the best ways to communicate with those most often affected by fire. While Fire is Everyone's Fight™ is designed to reach all members of society, it is very important to deliver the message to those at highest risk.



Think about potential partners.

Depending on the audience you want to address, there are a number of different ways you can go about reaching them. You don't have to do it alone. Many clubs and organizations in your area speak to the same kinds of groups you want to reach. Contact representatives from groups like the PTA (parents and families), nonprofit organizations, community event organizers, and clubs/member organizations such as the Elk's Lodge or Rotary Club, and tell them you have an important message to share with their groups.



Go where the people are.

Most towns or cities already have events like state/county fairs, health expos or farmers' markets with an audience that can be delivered to you. Look into community events where large crowds are expected, and ask about booth and/or workshop or speaking opportunities. Many of these organizations will often offer free or discounted booth space for a group like the fire department, so don't be afraid to ask.



Reach out to the media.

Any time you have an event or speaking opportunity, reach out to your local media to let them know what you're doing. If you have a public affairs officer in your department, they may have names of media contacts so that you don't have to do that research on your own. Getting a reporter to cover your event only adds to the number of people you'll be able to reach. Call your local TV stations and newspapers, and establish a relationship with reporters in your area who are assigned to cover community events. Getting your message out through the media may even lead to future speaking or educational opportunities.

Examples of Educational Opportunities

Open House

An open house is an excellent opportunity for members of your community to see what a real fire station is like; it's also a great time for you to have information and educational material available to give away. Set a date and time for your open house, and then spread the word to your community contacts. Issue a press release and distribute it to the local media. Include the kinds of activities and information that will be available, as well as times and contact information. You can even offer quick educational classes during your open house to share some of the core fire safety messages provided as part of Fire is Everyone's Fight™.

Neighborhood Canvass

One of the challenges in getting the message out is trying to reach people, so why not go right to their doorsteps? A neighborhood canvass puts you in direct contact with the very people who need to hear the message. Have a Fire is Everyone's Fight™ handout or a door hanger, as most people won't be able to remember everything you say when you're on their doorsteps. If possible, focus on the areas of your community at highest risk of fire, offer to install free smoke alarms, and provide fire safety information as part of your visit.

Club or Organization Event

Many clubs and organizations happily invite guest speakers; they just need to be asked. Whether it's the Elk's Lodge, the Rotary Club, or your local PTA, or organizations like the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club that hold meetings in your area, fire safety awareness often starts with a simple conversation with community residents. Make sure to ask ahead of time what kind of audiovisual equipment you'll have access to or if you'll need to bring your own. Plan your presentation accordingly. Make handouts available to people as they walk in or are leaving, so they'll have something to remind them about the information you presented. You can also use these settings to meet people who can make a difference in your community.

Utilizing Social Media to Engage with the Public

Social media is one of the most powerful ways to reach a large number of people in your community. It can be one of the most cost-effective, too. Here are some tips for using social media to educate your community about fire safety and prevention. You can also check out the “Digital Media Library” at <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/media/> to find a variety of copyright-free stock photos, social media images, videos and b-roll depicting best practices in fire prevention and fire-safe behaviors, which you can use and adapt to your community.

- **Use your social media platforms to ask questions or get feedback instead of just posting information.** Social networks are for interaction, so open a conversation with the people who follow you. The more that people interact with your page (e.g., comment on, share/retweet, or “like” your posts), the more often your posts will show up in their news feed. For example, instead of simply saying “Cooking is the main cause of home fires and injuries,” put it in the form of a quiz or question. Encourage people to respond with their best guesses, and then give the answer later.
- **Use graphics and/or photos as much as possible.** Research shows that people are more likely to read and/or interact with your post or message if it has a graphic or photo attached to it. Remember, they’re not expecting you to be an expert photographer or an amazing artist. The more genuine, the better. Several Fire is Everyone’s Fight™ Facebook and Twitter graphics are available and formatted for you to post on your page, set as your cover photo, or use in your feed. Visit <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/media> for a full set of graphics.
- **Watch for events or happenings in your community or around the country to which you can tie your messages on social media.** Make your posts timely. Tie them to what is going on around you, and people will be more likely to read them and interact. For example, talking about safe cooking and cooking fires during the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving is always sure to get a lot of discussion. Many people associate daylight saving time with changing the batteries in their smoke alarms, so sending out posts reminding people to test their smoke alarms and replace old alarms with new ones would be timely.

- **Connect with other organizations in your community to help cross-promote your posts and information.** Call and coordinate with social media managers of organizations that represent the target audiences you'd like to reach. This will increase the number of people you're able to contact with your messages.
- **Encourage participation and user-submitted content.** Invite your followers to send you content that encourages the use of Fire is Everyone's Fight™ graphics. People like to be noticed. Encourage your followers to send in photos or videos of how their family practices fire safety and prevention, and then share them across your social media channels.

What to Say and How to Say It

You've got a captive audience. Now what do you say to them?

USFA developed core messages on several topics, such as safe cooking and smoke alarms, as well as for specific target audiences (e.g., older adults, caregivers of babies and toddlers, and smokers) that you can use when you speak to your audiences. We worked with experts in the fire and life safety and adult literacy fields to ensure that they are accurate, to the point, and easy to understand and remember. The goal was not to say everything we know about fire safety; doing so can be overwhelming and confusing to the public. Instead, we focused on the most important points, repeating them often and in different ways so our audience hears and understands them.

The following tips and core messages have been developed to help you deliver effective, memorable content. Additionally, there is a variety of free fire safety and prevention outreach materials and educational programs available at www.usfa.fema.gov/FireisEveryonesFight.



Tips for Making Content Easier to Read

1

Stay focused. Limit the number of messages in each piece.

Resist the temptation to tell people everything you know about a topic. Decide what you want them to do and then decide what they need to know to be able to do that. Avoid the temptation to squeeze in additional messages.

Example

What We Want People to Do: Make sure your smoke alarms have working batteries.

What They Need to Know:

- People can die if they breathe in too much smoke.
- Smoke alarms wake you up when you are sleeping so you and your family can get out of your home safely.
- You have to make sure your alarms work so they can wake you up.
- Test your batteries every month.
- Replace your batteries every year.

2 Test what you write. See if your intended audience has any problem understanding your message or if you need to revise it.

Example

A warning label on a medicine bottle said, “You should avoid prolonged or excessive exposure to direct and/or artificial sunlight while taking this medication.” [Some people thought that meant: “Don’t leave medicine in the sun.”]

Better:

Don’t stay in direct sun or in artificial sunlight too long while you are taking this medicine.

3 Say it simply and get rid of excess words.

It often seems like we have a love affair with words—and the more the better! But too many unnecessary words can make our messages hard to read. For example, you could say “for the duration of the home safety visit.” But it would be more reader-friendly to simply say “during the home safety visit.”

Sometimes you just need to consider if there is a simpler way to say something. For example, do you need to say “accelerate” or will “speed up” be better for a general audience? Here’s an online tool you can use to check yourself: Plain English Campaign at <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/gobbledygook-generator.html>. On the top right side of the page, choose a word in the drop-down box of the “A – Z of Alternative Words.” Then click “Show plain English alternative” to see what the site suggests as a simpler word.

4 Don’t leave large gaps between words, and minimize the use of hyphenated words at the end of a line.

Set blocks of text with a ragged right margin. This means that each line of text aligns at the left side but not at the right side. This allows natural spacing between words and makes the text easier to read. When you align text on both sides, you are more likely to see large gaps between some words and increased use of hyphenated words at the end of the lines. Both of these can make text harder to read. It’s even more important to use ragged right if your column width is narrow since these effects will only get worse as the lines get narrower.



Example 1

Ragged right with medium line length and no hyphens

There are two kinds of alarms. Ionization smoke alarms are quicker to warn about flaming fires. Photoelectric alarms are quicker to warn about smoldering fires. It is best to use both types of alarms in the home.

Example 2

Justified right and left sides with shorter line length

Result: More hyphenation

There are two kinds of alarms. Ionization smoke alarms are quicker to warn about flaming fires. Photoelectric alarms are quicker to warn about smoldering fires. It is best to use both types of alarms in the home.

Example 3

Justified right and left sides with shorter line length and NO hyphens

Result: More large gaps between words

There are two kinds of alarms. Ionization smoke alarms are quicker to warn about flaming fires. Photoelectric alarms are quicker to warn about smoldering fires. It is best to use both types of alarms in the home.

5 Use illustrations to help people understand the text.

A good illustration can often help clarify or reinforce what you are saying in the text.

Example



6 Choose a font size that makes the text readable and prevents eyestrain.

If you need to shorten your piece, remove some of the text or graphics. Don't use a smaller type size just so you can fit more text on the page. Remember that, as people age, they find it harder to read small type. In general, use a body text size of 12-point. Use a larger size if your audience is likely to have vision problems.

Example: 14-point font size

There are two kinds of alarms.

Example: 12-point font size

There are two kinds of alarms.

Example: 10-point font size

There are two kinds of alarms.

7 Use less text and more empty space.

You want your information to be user friendly and as easy to understand as possible. You can do both these things by adding more empty (“white”) space in the margins, between the paragraphs, and around key elements.

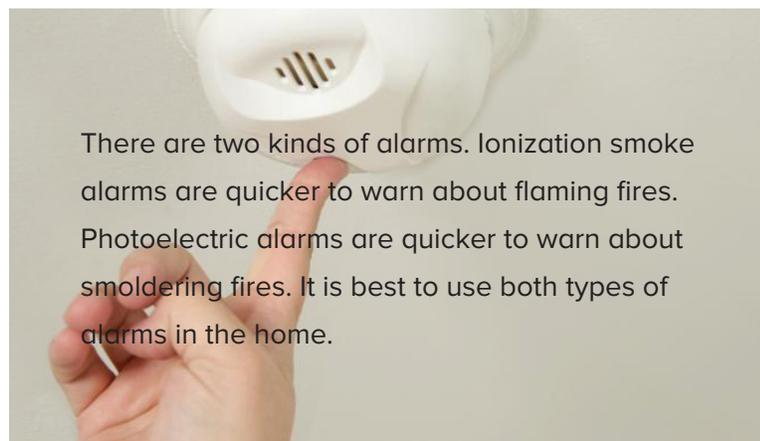
Example



8 Don't overuse graphic elements.

Focus on graphics that convey a message. Some people think that adding graphics makes a page more interesting. This is often true, but too many graphics can confuse readers or actually fight with the message you are trying to send. For example, many people would skip the page below rather than try to read text with a strong graphic behind it.

Example



9

Avoid idioms that can be difficult for people who are learning English or that may be unfamiliar even to some people who were born in this country.

Examples

He was racing against the clock to get his family out of the house safely.

Most firefighters would bend over backwards to get people out of a burning house.

That slumlord will get around to installing smoke alarms when pigs fly.

The fire is in the yellow house kitty-corner to the gas station.

10

Use shorter sentences.

Use sentences of different lengths to make the text more interesting, but keep the sentences simple. Limit most sentences to 10 to 15 words so they are easier to read. If you have sentences of more than 25 words, try to break them into two sentences.

Example: 35 words in one sentence

The fire department received the call at 9:15 a.m. and when they arrived at the site, they saw several people standing outside the home where flames were coming through the windows on the second floor.

Example: Same information in 3 sentences

The fire department received the call at 9:15 a.m. When they arrived at the site, they saw several people standing outside the home. Flames were coming through the windows on the second floor.

Adapting and Delivering the Message

When speaking to a group, remember that every audience is different. You wouldn't talk the same way to child care providers as you would to someone walking up to you at a booth at the fair. While the messages are appropriate for most adult audiences, your delivery should vary somewhat depending on your audience. Here are some tips for adapting the message:



Know the messages.

It helps a lot to read through and fully understand the messages and what they're saying ahead of time. This will allow you to make slight changes as you're speaking to each audience.



Talk with the group organizer beforehand.

Ask if there is anything you should know about your audience to help you adapt your message to them. For example, do they live alone? Do they care for young children?



Vary your delivery.

People learn differently. Some learn best and will remember what you say if you present it visually. Others learn best by hearing information. Since everyone is different and your audience will usually be made up of different kinds of people, mix it up and use a combination of visual and spoken/audio presentations.



Interact.

While you're there to present information, you don't want to make it feel like you're just giving a speech. Rather than talking the whole time, prepare questions that will help create a discussion. Interaction helps in the learning process. People may also have questions or want you to explain more, so leave time at the end of your presentation for a brief Q and A session. Finally, after you have completed your presentation, make yourself available for additional questions and/or feedback.



Keep it simple.

As with printed messages, avoid idioms that can be difficult for people to understand, such as: “Testing a smoke alarm is a piece of cake.” Use shorter sentences when possible.



Check for understanding.

When you are explaining something, repeat the key points in different ways. Be prepared to speak more slowly or more loudly depending on the audience. Make sure your audience understands what you are saying. Do not simply say, “Do you understand?” You may get a lot of nodding heads, but you still won’t be sure they understood. Ask open-ended questions instead. For example: “Where do you think a good meeting place would be for your family if there is a fire?” Use pictures, demonstrations, and role plays to enhance understanding.



Prepare for the presentation.

Keep the following tips in mind as you get ready for your presentation.

What’s in it for me?

All audiences want to know, “What’s in it for me?” and all speakers must answer that question if they want to communicate successfully with their audiences. This doesn’t mean that the key messages have to be changed for each audience, but each key message needs to be supported with information that is relevant to that audience.

Relate personal experience.

People respond to emotional as well as factual information, so we encourage you to draw on your own personal experience with fire safety to support key messages. This will enhance your sense of “ownership” of the materials in the speech, while making it more interesting to the audience. Without using names, describe some of the fire and burn incidents that have happened in your community and the impact they had on families, neighborhoods and the community as a whole.

Be conversational and passionate.

Although the materials you discuss may seem like just a checklist at times, many people respond to emotional appeals rather than a set of facts. Help people understand that fire safety is about keeping their family safe. This is a point to which everyone in the audience can connect. Also, as firefighters, you are highly respected for your bravery and heart, powerful tools to which audiences respond.

Props can work.

Ask for background information on the audience in advance of your presentation. For example, having a working smoke alarm on hand that you can test in front of the audience could enhance your presentation and your message about the importance of testing their smoke alarms.

Repetition is critical, so repeat, repeat, repeat.

Repetition is key to retention in any spoken communication. Most audiences have forgotten 90 percent of what they have been told within a week of the presentation. It's important to repeat a key message to ensure that it is remembered. At the end of your presentation, reinforce the three things you most want your audience to remember and do.

Example

When you get home today:

- Push the test button on all your smoke alarms. If they do not sound, fix or replace them immediately.
- Have a family fire drill to make sure your loved ones can wake up and get to your outside meeting place in three minutes or less.
- Keep an eye on what you fry. Remember to stay in the kitchen whenever you are cooking with high heat on the stove.

Use your body and your voice.

Body language and vocal tone are critical to ensuring that an audience listens to you and remembers what you say. Studies have shown that a relaxed, confident manner is even more important than the messages themselves to ensure that an audience is on your side at the end of a presentation. If possible, leave plenty of time for Q and A, and offer to address personal questions and issues one-on-one after you leave the podium.

Use and personalize a Fire is Everyone's Fight™ PowerPoint presentation.

Sample PowerPoint presentations are available at www.usfa.fema.gov/FireisEveryonesFight. Make the PowerPoint presentations your own! Insert your own photos and information specific to your area in order to connect with your audience. To do so:

- Save the image in the same folder as your PowerPoint presentation.
- Open the presentation to the slide where the image will go and click “Insert > Picture.”
- PowerPoint will ask you to select the photo from its folder.
- Click “Insert,” and position the image as you desire on the slide.

Practice makes perfect.

Don't just wing it! Prepare your remarks at least two days before your presentation. Take time to practice giving the presentation out loud. You can do this in the privacy of your office with the door closed or with a colleague to get his or her feedback. By saying the words out loud, it will help you remember the information during the actual presentation so you can maintain eye contact with your audience as much as possible. Plus, it is important to time your presentation so that you know how long it is.

The next section includes several core messages that you can use when talking with general audiences about fire safety.

Core Cooking Messages

Cooking is the main cause of home fires and fire injuries. You can prevent cooking fires. Take these steps to keep your family safe!



Keep an eye on what you fry.

Most cooking fires start when someone is frying food. Hot oil and grease can burn people and start fires. Always do these things when you fry food:

- Stand by your pan. If you leave the kitchen, turn the burner off.
- Watch what you are cooking. Fires start when the heat is too high. If you see any smoke or the grease starts to boil, turn the burner off.



Be a safe cook.

- Make sure you are awake and alert. Alcohol and some drugs can make you sleepy.
- Wear short sleeves or roll them up so they don't catch on fire.



Be prepared when cooking.

Make the cooking area safe.

- Make sure children and pets stay at least 3 feet away from a hot stove.
- Clean and clear the area around the stove before you turn on the heat.
- Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove so no one can bump them or pull them over.
- Keep a pan lid or a cookie sheet nearby. Use it to cover the pan if it catches on fire. Turn off the burner. Do not move the pan. Leave the lid on the pan until it has cooled.
- Move things that can burn away from the stove. This includes dishtowels, bags, boxes, paper, and curtains.

What to Do If Your Pan Is on Fire

Act fast.

- Keep the pan where it is. Do not move it!
- Slide the pan lid or a cookie sheet on top of the pan. This takes away the air. The fire goes out.
- Turn off the heat.
- Keep the lid on the pan until it is cool.
- Never try to stop a grease or oil fire with water. Water will make the fire bigger.

When in doubt, just get out. Call the fire department from outside.

- Get everyone outside. Get out fast.
- Go to your outside meeting place and call 9-1-1.
- After you get out, stay out. Never go back inside a burning building.



Oven fires

Turn off the oven. Keep the oven door closed. Call 9-1-1 so firefighters can make sure the fire did not get in the walls.



Microwave fires

Keep the microwave door closed. Unplug the microwave if you can. Don't use the microwave after a fire until someone checks it.



Preventing burns in the kitchen:

- Use oven mitts to take food out of the oven and microwave.
- Open food from the microwave slowly. Keep your face away from the hot steam.
- Keep hot food and drinks away from the edge of tables and counters.



If you burn your skin:

Cool a burn. Put the burn in cool water immediately. Keep it there for 3 to 5 minutes. This helps stop the burning. Cover it with a clean, dry cloth. If the burn is bigger than your palm, get medical help.



If your clothes are on fire:

Stop, drop and roll. Stop where you are right away. Drop to the ground and cover your face with your hands. Roll over and over, or roll back and forth. Keep doing this until the fire is out. Put the burn in cool water for 3 to 5 minutes and get medical help.

Remember, **Fire is Everyone's Fight™**.

Core Smoke Alarm Messages



Put smoke alarms in your home to keep your family safe.

- Smoke is poison. It can kill you.
- Smoke alarms make a loud noise when there is smoke in your home.
- Smoke alarms wake you up if you are sleeping.
- Put working smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside and outside sleeping areas. For the best protection, make sure all smoke alarms are interconnected, so if one sounds, they all sound.
- Smoke goes up. Put smoke alarms on the ceiling or high on the wall.



Make sure your smoke alarms work.

- Your family is not safe if they can't hear the smoke alarms.
- Test your smoke alarms. Push the test button. You will hear a loud noise. If you don't hear the noise, you need a new battery or a new alarm. Fix this immediately.
- Make sure the smoke alarm always has a good battery. Put a new battery in the alarm every year.

- Smoke alarms with long-life batteries will work for up to 10 years. You do not change the battery.
- Smoke alarms do not last forever. Get new smoke alarms every 10 years.



Know what to do if your smoke alarm makes a loud noise.

When you hear a smoke alarm, you may have less than three minutes to get everyone outside and safe.

Make an escape plan.

- Tell your family what to do if they hear the smoke alarm.
- Make an escape plan so everyone knows how to get out fast.
- Draw a map of each level of your home. Show all doors and windows.
- Know two ways out of each room.
- Pick an outside meeting place in front of your home where everyone will meet.
- Some children and older adults cannot hear the smoke alarm when they are sleeping. Make a plan for how to wake them up.
- Teach your children how to escape on their own, in case you cannot help them get out.
- Practice your escape plan with everyone in your family at least two times each year.

Use your escape plan if there is a fire.

- Go to your outside meeting place right away.
- Call 9-1-1 or the fire department from outside.
- Never go back inside a burning building.

Remember, **Fire is Everyone's Fight™**.

Core Messages for Caregivers of Babies and Toddlers

Young children (especially ages 0 to 4) are at higher risk of death or injury from a home fire than older children.



Have working smoke alarms.

Smoke is a poison that can kill you. Without a smoke alarm, you may not wake up from the smoke, and it can kill you as you sleep.

Most children who die in fires live in homes that don't have working smoke alarms. When you hear a smoke alarm, you may have less than 3 minutes to get everyone outside and safe. A smoke alarm will wake you and your family if there is a fire.

- **Have working smoke alarms.** Put working smoke alarms on every level of your home. Put them inside and outside sleeping areas. The sooner you know there is a fire, the more time you have to escape.
- **Test your smoke alarm once a month.** Push the test button. You will hear a loud noise. If you don't hear the noise, you need a new battery or a new alarm. Fix this immediately.
- **Replace smoke alarms after 10 years.** Smoke alarms do not last forever. Get new smoke alarms every 10 years.



Have and practice an escape plan.

It is important to have a plan when there are children in the home. Children sometimes need help getting out of the house, and they may not know how to escape or what to do unless an adult shows them.

- **Have a plan for young children who cannot get outside by themselves.** You will need to wake babies and very young children and help them get out. In your plan, talk about who will help each child get out safely.
- **Know two ways out of every room.** It is important to find two ways out of every room in the house, in case one exit is blocked or dangerous to use.

- **Choose an outside meeting place.** Teach children what to do when they hear the smoke alarm. Help them practice going to the outside meeting place. Teach them to never go back inside a building that is on fire.



Keep children safe from danger.

Some children are curious about fire.

- **Keep children 3 feet away from anything that can get hot.** Space heaters and stovetops can cause terrible burns. Keep children at least 3 feet away from stoves, heaters, or anything that gets hot.
- **Keep smoking materials locked up in a high place.** Never leave cigarette lighters or matches where children can reach them.
- **Never play with lighters or matches when you are with your children.** Children may try to do the same things they see you do.

Remember, **Fire is Everyone's Fight™**.

Core Messages for Older Adults

Older adults are more likely to die in home fires. Older adults may move more slowly or have trouble hearing a smoke alarm because of hearing loss.



Have working smoke alarms.

Smoke is a poison that can kill you. Without a smoke alarm, you may not wake up from the smoke, and it can kill you as you sleep.

Almost 2,500 people die in home fires every year in the United States. Most of these people live in homes that do not have working smoke alarms.

- **Have working smoke alarms.** Put working smoke alarms on every level of your home. Put them inside and outside sleeping areas. The sooner you know there is a fire, the more time you have to escape.
- **Test your smoke alarm once a month.** Push the test button. You will hear a loud noise. Use a broom handle to push the button or ask someone to use a ladder to help you with this. If you don't hear the sound, you need a new battery or a new alarm. Fix it immediately.

- **Can you hear your smoke alarm?** The standard smoke alarm sound does not wake some people. If you cannot hear your alarm, you may need an alarm that has a different sound or one that comes with a bed shaker or strobe light.
- **Replace smoke alarms after 10 years.** Smoke alarms do not last forever. Get new smoke alarms every 10 years.



Be a fire-safe smoker.

- **Smoke outside.** Many things in your home can catch on fire if they touch something hot like a cigarette or ashes. It is always safer to smoke outside.
- **Put cigarettes out all the way.** Do this every time. Don't walk away from lit cigarettes and other smoking materials. Put water on the ashes and butts to make sure they are really out before you put them in the trash.
- **Be alert.** Do not smoke after taking medicine that makes you tired. You may not be able to prevent or escape from a fire if you are sleepy or have taken medicine that makes you tired.
- **Never smoke around medical oxygen.** Medical oxygen can explode if a flame or spark is near. Even if the oxygen is turned off, it can still catch on fire.
- **Never smoke in bed.** Mattresses and bedding can catch on fire easily. Do not smoke in bed because you might fall asleep.
- **Put your cigarette out in an ashtray or bucket with sand.** Use ashtrays with a wide base so they won't tip over and start a fire.



Heat your home safely.

Heating is the second leading cause of fire death and the third leading cause of injury to people ages 65 and older.

- **Keep heaters at least 3 feet away from things that can burn.** Heaters can cause fires if they are too close to furniture, beds, curtains, or other materials. Turn space heaters off before you leave the home.



Make an escape plan around your abilities.

You may have less than 3 minutes to get out of a burning building. It's important to have an escape plan before a fire occurs, so everyone is prepared and ready to act.

- **Make a plan.** If there is a fire, you may have less than 3 minutes to get out. Talk about what you should do to be safe. Make sure everyone in your home knows what to do if there is a fire. Practice your home escape plan at least 2 times a year.
- **Know 2 ways out of every room.** It is important to find 2 ways out of every room in your home, in case one exit is blocked or dangerous to use.
- **Think about your needs.** If you need to use a wheelchair or a cane, make sure you can get to them easily and get out quickly. If you wear a hearing aid or eyeglasses, put them next to your bed while you are sleeping.
- **When you get out, stay out.** Do not try to go back in your home.
- **Know where to meet outside of your home.** Choose an outside meeting place. Call 911 when you are safely outside.

Caregivers are often in the best position to help an older adult stay safe at home.

Here are some ways you can help:

- Make sure the smoke alarms work and that they will wake people up when they are sleeping.
- Test smoke alarms once a month.
- Replace smoke alarms after 10 years.
- Make a fire escape plan that tells what each person will need to do to get out safely.
- Make sure no one smokes in bed or around medical oxygen.
- Keep 3 feet between heaters and materials that can catch fire.
- Remind the older adults to keep a phone, hearing aid, and glasses next to their bed.

Remember, **Fire is Everyone's Fight™**.

Core Smoking Messages

Smoking is the number 1 cause of home fire deaths across the country. But you can prevent fires caused by cigarettes and other smoking materials.



Be a fire-safe smoker.

- **Smoke outside.** Many things in your home can catch on fire if they touch something hot like a cigarette or ashes. It is always safer to smoke outside.
- **Put cigarettes out all the way.** Do this every time. Don't walk away from lit cigarettes and other smoking materials. Put water on the ashes and butts to make sure they are really out before you put them in the trash.
- **Be alert.** Do not smoke after taking medicine that makes you tired. You may not be able to prevent or escape from a fire if you are sleepy or have taken medicine that makes you tired.
- **Never smoke around medical oxygen.** Medical oxygen can explode if a flame or spark is near. Even if the oxygen is turned off, it can still catch on fire.
- **Never smoke in bed.** Mattresses and bedding can catch on fire easily. Do not smoke in bed because you might fall asleep with a lit cigarette.
- **Put your cigarette out in an ashtray or bucket with sand.** Use ashtrays with a wide base so they won't tip over and start a fire.



Have a working smoke alarm.

Smoke is a poison that can kill you. Without a smoke alarm, you may not wake up from the smoke, and it can kill you as you sleep.

If you smoke, you are more likely to die in a home fire. It's important to have smoke alarms that work in case there is a fire.

- **Have a working smoke alarm.** Put working smoke alarms on every level of your home. Put them inside and outside sleeping areas. The sooner you know there is a fire, the more time you have to escape.

- **Test smoke alarms once a month.** Push the test button. You will hear a loud noise. If you don't hear the noise, you need a new battery or a new alarm. Fix this immediately. A smoke alarm with dead batteries is the same as not having a smoke alarm.
- **Replace smoke alarms after 10 years.** Smoke alarms do not last forever. Get new smoke alarms every 10 years.



Make an escape plan.

You may have less than 3 minutes to get out. It's important to have an escape plan before a fire occurs, so everyone is prepared and ready to act.

- **Make a plan.** If there is a fire, you may have less than 3 minutes to get out. Talk about what you should do to be safe. Make sure everyone in your home knows what to do if there is a fire. Practice your home escape plan at least 2 times a year.
- **Protect others.** Do your part to make your home safe for yourself and others who live with you.
- **Keep smoking materials away from children.** Some children are curious about fire. Keep lighters and matches locked up in a high place. Never leave cigarette lighters or matches where children can reach them.

Remember, **Fire is Everyone's Fight™**.

Your local media can be a great tool for getting the word out about Fire is Everyone's Fight™.

One of the most effective means for getting information to target audiences is by working with print and broadcast editors and reporters to gain editorial coverage or coverage that you do not pay for as you would an advertisement.

In this section, we will explain what to do if you receive a call from the media. Additionally, we will explain how to prepare for a media interview and provide consistent, clear and succinct responses.



The Interview Request

Members of the media may contact you directly to request an interview. The best way to work with the media is to think like they do and be prepared. Please consider the following tips when you receive a call from the media:

The Inquiry

- **Stay calm.** Write down the reporter's name, position, publication or station, and telephone number, and ask for their deadline. Politely ask for background on the story and any specific questions the reporter will want to ask.
- **Prepare.** Before talking to the reporter, prepare a list of the key messages that you want to deliver about the topic. Unlike advertising, with earned media the reporters are under no obligation to run your quotes or the segment past you. You can offer to fact check the story with them, and some may allow you to review your quotes. Being prepared and knowing your key messaging will make for an interview you can feel confident about, so don't underestimate the power of preparation.
- **Respond quickly.** Reporters often have only a few hours to research topics, conduct interviews, and write their stories. While you can take a half hour or so to get ready, try not to wait too long, as tomorrow may be too late. Return the call immediately to acknowledge the request, and give them a time by which you will provide a response. Then follow through!

The Interview

- **Stick to the point.** During the interview, stay focused and speak in brief sentences using everyday (not technical) language.
- **Be clear.** Try to avoid acronyms and jargon, which are common in the fire and emergency services fields.
- **Identify yourself.** Give your full title and provide biographical background information as appropriate.
- **Use examples and anecdotes, especially from within your community.** Good real-world examples can simplify complex subjects and make them more interesting. Few reporters can resist them.
- **Ask questions.** If you suspect that a reporter doesn't understand what you're saying, ask a question. Get him or her to repeat what you've said.
- **Avoid saying anything "off the record."** There is really no such thing. It's better not to tell a reporter anything you don't want to see in print or on television. Remember, going off the record isn't retroactive. You can't tell a reporter something and then take it back.
- **Use humor carefully.** A funny remark often seems sarcastic or negative on the air or printed page.
- **Offer to fact check.** Always offer to help ensure accuracy by reviewing factual information and quotes. Some news outlets have rules against sharing their stories or even quotes in advance. If the reporter declines to let you review the copy but you are concerned about being misquoted, ask the reporter what he or she intends to quote from what you have said during the interview.
- **Provide informational materials.** Never send a reporter away empty-handed. Provide news releases, photos, handouts, etc.
- **Make eye contact.** During a TV interview, make eye contact with the person interviewing you, even if they are off to the side of the camera. Don't look directly in the camera lens.

The Follow-Up

- **Confirm placement date.** Ask a reporter when the story will air or be published.
- **Share on social media.** Post a link to great stories on your social media pages, and tag the reporter/station/writer. It helps reach even more audience.
- **Recognize a job well done.** If the story is good, write a note to let the reporter know. It can help build a positive relationship.
- **Address mistakes.** If the reporter gets something wrong, decide whether to overlook the error if it is minor, or call the reporter and request that a correction be made, if the mistake is major.



Ideas for Getting the Media Involved

Print/Television Media

- Create a press release. As an idea starter, several sample releases have been posted in the “Working with the Media” section of <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/FireIsEveryonesFight>. Be sure to include your contact information.
- Send the press release to the assignment desks of all newspapers and radio and television stations in your area. Email is the preferred means of sending releases. Call the newspaper, or check its website to find the appropriate email address.
- Call local TV and radio stations and speak with the assignment editor (TV) or news director (radio). Offer to email the information, and send the news release again if necessary.
- Make similar calls to the newspaper editors and reporters who cover fire and personal health and safety stories and offer to email or deliver materials in person.
- Most TV stations air public affairs programs (usually on weekends) that address important issues in the community. Fire safety is of importance to the community, so offer yourself as a guest to discuss fire safety issues specific to your area.

- Consult the calendar for seasonal opportunities to contact the media. There are times that they will be doing stories that dovetail perfectly with the FIEF message: Fourth of July and fireworks; summer and brush fire; winter and space heaters. These topics are going to be talked about in the media anyway, so why not offer your expertise to help reporters with their stories?
- Use one of the prepared TV public service announcements (PSAs) available at <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/FireIsEveryonesFight>. Contact the public affairs or community outreach directors of local television stations, and ask if you can send the PSAs for their advertising rotation as a public service.

Radio Stations

- Use one of the prepared radio public service announcements (PSAs) available at [http://www.usfa.fema.gov/FireIsEveryones Fight](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/FireIsEveryonesFight). Call the station managers of local radio stations in your area, and ask them to put the PSAs in their advertising rotation as a public service. Don't forget to include your local cable and community access stations. These stations are often looking for good content and will sometimes repeat stories over and over.
- Make sure to follow up after sending and ask when they plan on airing the PSAs. A little follow-up can make all the difference!
- Most radio stations are obligated to run community affairs programming and will often focus on nonprofits and community issues. Find out who handles public affairs programs at your local radio stations, and contact them about having you on to discuss all things related to Fire is Everyone's Fight™.

Fire is Everyone's Fight™ Graphic Use

One of the main goals of Fire is Everyone's Fight™ was to create a graphic that people recognize and associate with things they can do to keep their families and homes safe from fires.



Displaying the graphic in as many places as possible will help us accomplish this goal. That's where you come in. Here is a list of ways you can use and incorporate the graphic and theme in the work you do:

- Add the graphic and/or tagline to all educational handouts produced by your department.
- Create a banner with the graphic to place on your fire station.
- Create a decal to display prominently on your fire apparatus.
- Place the graphic in multiple places on your website, especially on the pages devoted to public awareness and education.
- Use the graphic, or one of our other social media images in the “Digital Media Library” at <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/media/> as your Facebook cover photo or Twitter header image for a week.
- Tweet one of these graphics to your Twitter followers along with fire safety messages. Use the graphic on all of your official correspondences (letterhead, envelopes, business cards and tent cards for meetings and conferences).

- Create a flag of the graphic to fly on your fire apparatus for parades and other events.
- Create a vehicle wrap to affix to your department vehicles.
- Put the graphic in your email signature.
- Create refrigerator magnets featuring key messages and the graphic.
- Hand out inexpensive key chains, pencils, Frisbee discs and other promotional items at events that feature the graphic and/or tagline.
- Promote the graphic and/or tagline on electronic signage in front of your fire station.
- Meet with the manager of your local sports stadium, cinemas, etc., to ask them to display the graphic and/or tagline.
- Add them to your official biography when making presentations, for example, “_____ is working with the _____ Fire Department to support an exciting national initiative led by the U.S. Fire Administration called Fire is Everyone’s Fight™.”

For permission to use the Fire is Everyone’s Fight™ graphic, visit www.usfa.fema.gov/FireisEveryonesFight. We invite you to send photos of your own creative uses of the Fire is Everyone’s Fight™ graphic to FEMA-FireisEveryonesFight@fema.dhs.gov so we can post them online.

Fire is Everyone’s Fight™ Outreach Materials and Educational Programs

In addition to using the Fire is Everyone’s Fight™ graphic, you can help your fire department increase community awareness about preventing home fires with a variety of free fire safety and prevention outreach materials and educational programs available at www.usfa.fema.gov/FireisEveryonesFight.

Among the online resources you will find:

- Fire safety and prevention webinars
- Public service announcement videos and radio spots
- Social media tools (with a complete “Digital Media Library” available at <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/media/>).
- Bilingual outreach materials such as flyers, checklists, and door hangers for specific audiences and topics.

Alternatively, search downloadable resources by topic:

- After a home fire
- Arson awareness
- Burn prevention
- Carbon monoxide
- Clothes dryers
- Cooking
- Electrical
- Escape planning
- Fire extinguishers
- Garage and basement fires
- Heating
- Holidays, candles and Christmas trees
- Hotels and motels
- Novelty lighters
- Smoke alarms
- Smoking
- Sprinklers (fire)
- Summer
- Winter
- Wildfire

We Want to Hear from You.

Fire is Everyone's Fight™ is in your hands. Its success depends on what you do with it, so we want to hear from you. Please let us know about the successes you're seeing, the stories you're creating, and the lives you're changing so we can share them with your peers. Send your stories to **FEMA-FireisEveryonesFight@fema.dhs.gov**.

Follow us on Facebook (**www.Facebook.com/USFA**) or on Twitter (**[@usfire](https://twitter.com/usfire)**), and let us know what you're doing to get the word out about Fire is Everyone's Fight™.

U.S. Fire
Administration



FEMA

