

City of Paterson, Program Design

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### Abstract

Paterson has long been a City rich with culture and a dynamic demographic. Along with this history has been a statistical anomaly; an unacceptable fire and fire fatality rate. What can be done to combat this fire problem? Aside from an aggressive Inspection program, we must see a rise in the installation and maintenance of smoke detectors. The Fire Department of the City has many strengths that enable a coordinated aggressive approach toward educating the public of the need to have this protective measure in place. This project will outline a program that is designed to maximize our young diverse staff and refocus their efforts to initiate community involvement and awareness. It will address the pre-identified weakness of low community involvement and visibility. The intent is to enable and task the public with increasing their awareness of the necessity to install and maintain smoke detectors to give early warning of fire. We will answer the question of; what will the Paterson Fire Department do to increase the instance of smoke detector protected properties?

## Introduction

A true gap has been identified for the City of Paterson NJ. The lack of smoke detector protected buildings is unacceptable. This project will describe the actual plan to accomplish this daunting task. We will get into the who, what, when, where, why and how this program will take shape. The impact to the community will be great and it is expected that the statistics will prove this. In projects 1 & 2, the background was provided with regard to a demographic and statistical breakdown demonstrating why this program is needed. Here we will define and implement the corrective action program.

## A Community Issue

The program begins with community involvement. A committee including Fire Department decision makers, church groups, block association presidents, school board members, Ward Counsel, the Mayor and other socially backed entities will meet. The purpose of the committee formation will be to involve stakeholders from different levels of interest. This will help define different ways to approach the myriad of cultures within this diverse City. Another goal with this approach is to break down political barriers and show the real problem, unmasked, to gain the support of elected officials. The fire problem will be outlined to the committee for them to comment. Each representative will be given a form that will enable them to provide concerns and ideas. The Committee Chair and staff will compile a list of common concerns and suggested approaches to solve the problem. This will lead to the next part of the program; Develop Objectives.

## Objectives

The Objectives are to educate the staff, educate the public, provide resources to the public, maintain no or low cost for the program and set a timeline for delivery. Following is a breakdown of the objectives that we have just defined.

How do we educate our staff to ensure that we issue proper information? We will start by accessing free publications given by the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety.<sup>1</sup> This will be provided and explained to our staff to ensure they are clear on expectations. We will test the staff and keep a record on file.

How do we educate the public? The public will be educated through material gained for free through the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety website. Education will be provided during Block Association meetings, Back to School Nights, in booths outside of High School football/basketball games and at cultural parades/events. We will add a free public service announcement on Public Access Television. This will state where to get detectors for free, who is eligible to receive them, identify areas of installation in the home, how to maintain detectors and why you should have smoke detectors installed in your home. We will also educate the public during our tri-annual multiple family property inspections.

The resources needed are as follows: smoke detectors with battery and installation hardware will be acquired through Operation Seven Save-A-Life. Printing stationary will come from the Department Budget and will require one case of paper and ink to populate the paper. Other resources are people. The people resource will be representatives from the committee formulated earlier in this paper.

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<sup>1</sup> See NJDFS website for information in regard to Smoke detector placement:  
[http://www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/fs\\_facts\\_smoke\\_alarm\\_safety.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/fs_facts_smoke_alarm_safety.pdf)

In this time of economic crisis, it is imperative to perform services at a lower cost. You will notice one common theme so far; the use of the word “free”. This program has the ability to add no more than the cost of a case of paper while saving untold amounts in property and life loss cost. The Smoke detectors are now equipped with 10 year batteries, thus extending the life of the detector and reducing the chance that an occupant will let lack of maintenance be their downfall. Also included in the detector is a Carbon Monoxide sensor adding to its marketability. There is also no cost for airing on public access television. A videographer comes to Fire Headquarters and will tape a public service announcement for free. All personnel will be on duty, ensuring to cause no Overtime.

What is the timeline? The timeframe for delivery is very dynamic and open to flexibility.

- It will take two months to properly meet with the committee to ensure full representation of the stakeholders.
- There will be a one month period for the procurement of resources once the committee decides the path.
- It will take two months to properly train all of the staff in smoke detector codes and compliance.
- There will be a one month pilot program once the Chief gives approval. This will include a formal review by the committee to ensure that our objectives are meeting our overall strategy of smoke detector awareness and installation
- Final implementation of the Action Plan.
- Review, Evaluate and Revise as needed

### Action Plan

We are now to the program implementation phase of the project. Having performed the fact finding mission stated in words prior, we now must put it all together. The program works in a layered approach to fill any gaps that may exist. It is a vast program without seeming so.

This program begins with enforcement of existing codes to force property owners to comply when Fire Inspectors find deficient systems. This will be during the course of their routine inspections. All Fire Inspectors will have a cache of 24 smoke detectors in their vehicles at all times. Free smoke detectors will be given to those residents in need of non-common area detection. This portion currently is in existence.

The new portion will be to coordinate community involvement of in-service fire companies. A schedule will be developed which will have these companies visit community meetings, block parties and sporting events. They will be armed with forty smoke detectors each and accompanied by receipt forms and installation instructions. There will be an attempt to identify which events contain majority of Spanish speaking public and include a Spanish speaking staff member. The essence of this program is to get these hidden personnel out into the open where they can relate to and be recognized by the community at large. The message must be strong and our current fatality statistics may be used to drive home the necessity for having detection.

### Conclusion

This program is designed to combat the fire problem in the City of Paterson. Early warning saves lives and property. The main focus is to reduce the rate of fatal fires which have proven to be all too common for the City. This must, however, be done keeping in mind the ability of the City to pay for this type of service. Paterson Faces a \$25 Million deficit before starting the next budget cycle (Paterson, 2011). This program delivers a great product and utilizes on-duty personnel more efficiently all while defraying the cost to taxpayers and reducing budget impact.

References

City of Paterson (2011). 2011 Annual Budget. *Annual Budget, City of Paterson NJ*

New Jersey Division of Fire Safety (2012). Smoke Alarm Safety. Found on the web at:

[http://www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/fs\\_facts\\_smoke\\_alarm\\_safety.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/fs_facts_smoke_alarm_safety.pdf)

