



# Developing a Community Fire Safety Coalition

Responsibility for the fire safety of your community falls directly on the local fire department. To ensure your organization has the greatest impact on this critical need, you should include the entire community as you plan your strategies to make your community fire safe. The easiest way to accomplish this and involve a cross-segment of your population is to take the lead role in the formation of a Community Fire Safety Coalition. A Community Fire Safety Coalition brings together different people, representing different areas of the community and business worlds, representing different views, but ultimately representing the same desire and need to take action in order to have a fire safe community.

In addition to helping deliver valuable fire safety messages to your entire community, this group can assist in raising funds, recruiting members and performing many non-operational duties and tasks for your organization.

A Community Fire Safety Coalition works closely with the fire department with to promote fire safety education for our citizens while also identifying ways to eliminate and prevent fire risk and disasters that may impact our community.

An effective coalition (including a Community Fire Safety Coalition) uses the following steps when organizing:

## Step 1: Determine Whether to Form a Coalition

Situations are identified that may lead to the formation of a coalition:

1. A need is recognized (fire statistics indicate the need for fire education)
2. An organization recognizes a coalition will help fulfill its goals (a coalition is a better avenue to use to reach citizens)

It is important to determine if a coalition is the most appropriate tool for the need at hand.

There should be no other organization currently addressing this specific need.

- Identify and state clear objectives, as well as activities that support those objectives.
- Understand the political context. Identify the costs and benefits of developing a coalition.

## Step 2: Recruit the Right People

The membership of a coalition should be determined by the coalition's goals and objectives. The individuals and organizations that have a stake in the outcome should be present. Coalitions are usually designed to include the resources, the knowledge and the experience necessary to address the issue. Seek out those individuals or groups that are needed to support the effectiveness of the effort. If specialized knowledge or expertise is needed, consider developing an advisory group.

All the parties at the table should be committed to addressing the issue. If organizations are involved, make sure their respective missions and visions are complementary to that of the coalition.

Once you have identified the potential membership of the coalition, send an invitation letter to those persons to briefly explain your intent (see Module 2 Appendix for a sample invitation letter).

## Step 3: Create Preliminary Objectives and Activities

Coalition members should work together to identify objectives that move the fire safety coalition forward. The creation of mission and vision statements can assist this process. Again, it is important that the mission and the vision of coalition members are complementary to those of the coalition itself.

Develop activities that address the needs of the participating groups using the knowledge, skills and experiences of coalition members. Small successes can often be achieved with minimal effort and serve as a foundation to keep members engaged in the process.