



Get Alarmed, Tennessee! Success Stories

Fire Department: Fayette County Fire Department, Chief Jerry Ray

-As a county department, how did you handle making this program work utilizing multiple stations stretched out over a large county?

The Fayette County Fire Department consists of 170 great volunteers and 8 districts and covers 705 square miles (the 3rd largest county in Tennessee). We first did the State Fire Marshal's Office train the trainer presentation for all the district chiefs to insure we all understood our project and goal. Then once the districts chiefs had passed this information on to all their personnel, we started contacting our civic, community, and religious groups pursuing an opportunity to present our presentation to their group. This created a large list of presentation dates suddenly. Many of these groups were in excess of 100 people.

-Did you contact your local paper or news media to help spread the word of the free alarms?

We did not contact any outside sources to advertise information about the alarms and I am happy we did not in our case. The organizations we attended with our presentations were such a success I am still holding over 500 addresses that want alarms.

-How did you seek out the people in your community in most need of the smoke alarms?

The Fayette County Fire Department has a responsibility to protect every structure, citizen and visitor in our county to the very best of our ability. Our address search was to install an alarm in every location where they were needed no matter the location, value of structure or income level. Yet we do work hard to ensure the ones in greatest need get one first: such as the older homes, homes of the elderly or disabled, and those with no working alarms. We try to turn no one down that needs an alarm.

-How did you handle scheduling and managing your staff to do the installations?

Fayette County Fire Department, as many others, relies on great volunteers to make the department a success. The volunteers work an assortment of shifts on their regular jobs, so I try to work with their schedule as much as possible. Many would take a small list of addresses and install these on their off days or weekends. I supplied my volunteers with small lists of addresses working to distribute these over a large number of people to reduce the work load. They would then report back with information once the list was complete.

-Did you need to create any special forms, badges, etc. or purchase any additional equipment or supplies to help with the administration of the program?

We created a field form to be sent out with the same information as the SFMO's installation report form. This gave us a copy of the information to be kept in each district the alarm was installed. We would transfer this information over to the state's alarm form once completed. This created a record in each district the alarm was installed and a master list for the administrative office.

-What was the residents' overall reaction to this free service that was provided to them?

Overall the reaction was exceptional. The residents were very appreciative of the alarms and it gave us a chance to tell them about the department and other safety ideas they may use around their home. We really stress testing alarms, evacuation plans and correct trash burning.



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Fire Department: Johnson City Fire Department, Assistant Chief Chris Williams

-How and why did you determine the area you were going to target?

In the previous 18 months our city had experienced seven fire related deaths. The fire deaths occurred in middle class neighborhoods throughout various districts of the city. We instituted a citywide smoke alarm distribution campaign targeting middle class neighborhoods to address this critical circumstance. We decided to get the smoke alarms out to our citizens and installed as quickly as possible. Engine and ladder companies were engaged in a door-to-door dissemination approach.

-Did you contact your local media (TV, radio, and newspaper) and ask them to help spread the word about the free smoke alarms?

Working cooperatively with our Community Relations Department we sent out a media release announcing our citywide Smoke Alarm Distribution Campaign. The release also identified our working relationship with the Tennessee State Fire Marshal's Office and their donation of free smoke alarms to our campaign. Two local TV stations, the local newspaper and several radio stations conducted interviews with our Fire Chief and personnel from our Fire Marshal's Division. This helped spread the word about the importance of having properly installed and working smoke alarms in the home as a key to preventing fire related deaths and injuries. The smoke alarms would be distributed and installed, at no cost, by our firefighters to citizens of the City of Johnson City. Citizens were provided a phone number to call to request a free smoke alarm. A contact list was created and this information was passed along to the Suppression Division Shift Commanders to schedule installations at particular addresses.

-Did you need to create any special forms, badges, etc. to help with the administration of the program?

Yes, our organization created an internal smoke alarm distribution form to accurately track each and every smoke alarm and installation address. This has helped in providing accurate data for the State Fire Marshal's Office Smoke Alarm Campaign, our departmental annual budget, and weekly reports to the City Manager. In addition, a Standard Operating Guideline was created and implemented to help educate all of our personnel on the expectations, procedures and goals of our campaign.

-What was the overall citizen reaction to the free service that was provided them?

We had and continue to have a very positive reception to our Smoke Alarm Distribution Campaign. It has been an excellent public relations opportunity for our fire department. In fact, we have received several donations helping to further our cause of providing free smoke alarms to any and all city residences that need them.

An effective smoke alarm installation program depends on a successful publicity strategy. Getting the word out about your campaign will inform local residents that you're going to be in their neighborhood, and get people talking about smoke alarms and fire safety.



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Fire Department: City of East Ridge Fire Rescue, Deputy Fire Marshal Kenny Custer

-Who were your partners in your smoke alarm installation efforts and how did you select and train these partners?

We were able to partner with our local Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis Club, Merchants Association, Optimist Club, and Ruritan Club. I went and spoke at each of their meetings about the fire risk and fatality rate that Tennessee faces as well as the plans for reduction. At the end of each meeting every group wanted to participate in the smoke alarm installation class. I set up class dates to teach individuals the same class the fire service took through the State Fire Marshal's Office. We received great feedback from the classes.

-How did you organize the partners? How did you handle the scheduling of times to install? Did you send some of your folks out with them, or did they go out on their own?

I sent an email out about a week prior to our first installation date to all the individuals that had attended the training class asking who would be available to do installations. I set a 4 hour window to conduct the installations and had a strategy meeting at the fire station prior to departure to the installation area. I paired people in teams of two - a few groups had 1 fire service provider with them, others were on their own. I went around and checked on each group and spoke to the homeowners to ensure quality of service. We had a mixed group: some that could not perform the installations, but were more than happy to be educators. So the groups were paired accordingly.

-Did you need to create any special forms, badges, etc. to help with the administration of the program?

I created a sign in sheet for everyone that attended the class so I could keep up attendance records and also had a space for them to choose if they wanted to do installations or education. I also had I.D. badges made that had installer numbers on them that were signed out by the individual. We also created a notification form about the program and left it on the door of the occupants that were not at home. I had a banner made and placed at the entrance to the subdivision giving date and time of installations along with press releases.

-Did you or the partners identify the folks in need of alarms beforehand and then go do the installations or did you just target certain at-risk spots and do the door-to-door method?

We did go door-to-door in an at risk neighborhood. We were also able to identify citizens that were at risk for falls and noted the addresses for the individuals that need handicap accessibility. By partnering with the civic organizations, they have dedicated funding to provide free assistance to those with certain handicap needs as well.

-Do you have any final tips to share with other departments?

In order to test the alarm it must be secured in the bracket prior to installation. Also, a lot of homes built in the 70's we encounter have radiant ceiling heat or (ceiling heat) which could be a concern if you did an installation on the ceiling.



Get Alarmed, Tennessee! Success Stories

Fire Department: Memphis Fire Department, Deputy Chief Daryl K. Payton

-How did you seek out the folks in your community most in need of these alarms? How did you conduct smoke alarm installations for these people?

We conducted a community analysis of the residential fire incidents and determined that on average, the community averages 3 residential structural fires per day and roughly 15 civilian fire fatalities per year since 1998. The majority of the residential homes were not protected by working smoke alarms.

Through fire incident data mapping, we were able to identify residential neighborhoods with unusually high residential fires. We felt it essential to ensure that all residential homes in high-risk areas were protected by working smoke alarms. The high-risk communities most in need of residential smoke alarms were South Memphis, Orange Mound, Parkway Village, Hickory Hill, Frayser, and Raleigh. Fire stations in these areas instituted a smoke alarm canvass campaign and engaged in door-to-door efforts to offer and to install working smoke alarms, and to provide key fire safety information to the residents.

-Did you use your local news media to help spread the word about the free alarms? What was the result of this?

Our Public Information Officer distributed public service announcements via local news media to disseminate our outreach program to high-risk community areas. The media release announced that fire crews will go door-to-door to install smoke alarms for residence that do not currently have at least one working smoke alarm as well as our working relationship with the Tennessee State Fire Marshal's Office and its donations of the 10-year smoke alarms at no cost to our citizens. The local news media networks were willing to help the Fire Department in getting out our public service announcements to the citizens.

-How did you handle scheduling and managing your staff to do the installations?

Our Battalion Chiefs assumed responsibility for managing the smoke alarm installation campaign by fire stations within the high risk areas. Our Fire Lieutenants assigned to fire stations within these areas were responsible for properly installing the smoke alarms, providing fire safety information to residents, and collecting the installation documentation. The working task was completed without difficulty.

-What was the residents' overall reaction to this free service that was provided to them?

Citizens had a very positive reception to our fire fighters and the smoke alarm canvass within their communities. Many of our citizens had seen or heard the fire safety message of the Fire Department, but they were not cognizant of the 10-year smoke alarms. The smoke alarm canvass has been an excellent public relation opportunity for our fire department to demonstrate that our first line of defense in residential fires is a working smoke alarm in every home.

Many thanks to the Tennessee State Fire Marshal's Office for providing the 10-year lithium battery smoke alarms. We are excited to be part of your efforts to reduce the high rate of fire fatalities in the state of Tennessee. As you know, installation of smoke alarms is one of the most important things we can do as fire service professionals to decrease these unnecessary deaths. We look forward to further participation in this important outreach program and hope to receive more smoke alarms for installation in high-risk areas within the City of Memphis.