

Preparedness Campaign 2014: Home Fires

Executive Summary

Seven times a day, someone dies in a home fire. Every 40 minutes, an injury from a fire is reported. Nearly 1,000 times every day, fire departments are called to home fires. Damage from US home fires is bigger than the entire annual sales of many Fortune 500 companies.

For the past 20 years, these numbers have been relatively stagnant.

By mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors, the American Red Cross and our coalition partners will attack that stagnation. In an unprecedented, nationwide effort to combine new technology and innovation with old-fashioned neighbor-to-neighbor outreach, we will save lives, reduce injuries, and cut down on needless losses.

Our goal is to reduce the number of fire deaths and injuries in the United States by 25% within five years.

There are three cornerstones to the strategy:

- 1) Door-to-door installation of smoke alarms and completion of home-safety checklists and plans in vulnerable neighborhoods,
- 2) Engagement of youth in classrooms and after school with technology, challenges, and science-based education,
- 3) A marketing and public relations campaign to motivate ordinary people to take action to save themselves, their families and their neighbors by checking smoke alarms and practicing evacuating when the alarm goes off.

The Red Cross and our partners will do this by establishing local coalitions in communities all across America, including local fire departments, houses of worship, businesses, schools, after-school groups, public health departments, social service agencies, neighborhood leaders and others. These coalitions will support all elements of the strategy.

One cornerstone of the campaign is going door to door where it counts the most. Data shows that the 4% of homes without smoke alarms represent nearly 40% of the home fires, and that working smoke alarms can double someone's chance of surviving a fire. By combining data from 5 years of responses to home fires by Red Cross volunteers with demographic risk factors like poverty, maps will highlight the neighborhoods at greatest risk.

The coalition will also be nimble and target areas dynamically in the event that there is an outbreak of fires in a neighborhood during the campaign. Volunteers from the coalition will go to homes in those neighborhoods with home safety checklists, family disaster plan templates, and smoke alarms. When invited, they will complete a checklist and plan with the family, and they will install smoke alarms in the residence. We will also install smoke alarms as needed for our clients who move into new homes after a disaster, and engage our partners who provide services in homes to install alarms as well.

The goal each year is to install 500,000 smoke alarms. One national coalition partner has already committed to providing 150,000 volunteers to install smoke alarms nationwide.

Youth engagement will include school- and after-school-based programs aimed at educating young people about fire safety, a youth-oriented smart phone app that will make learning about disasters fun, and a youth challenge aimed at harnessing the creativity of America's young people to solve the complex problems around home-fire prevention.

Finally, a marketing campaign will support the strategy by encouraging individuals who feel responsible for others to check their smoke alarms and know their escape plans. Data indicates that about half of installed smoke alarms are not functioning, usually due to dead or removed batteries. And new fire

science shows that people in most modern homes have only about three minutes to evacuate after a fire starts, which means people need to know their escape routes and take the smoke seriously.

About the Preparedness Campaign

The 2014 Home Fire Preparedness Campaign is the kick-off of a multi-year, two-prong preparedness strategy for the American Red Cross. The goals of the strategy are to save lives that are lost to preventable causes like fires, disasters, choking, and cardiac arrest and to improve the resilience of the social safety net in the face of disasters.