Presentation Title: Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition Builder & Vocational Student Education Program

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I. Formative Evaluation – Planning

In response to national data from the USFA and NFPA, HFSC focuses exclusively on homes where the greatest fire injury and death risk are. Because fire sprinklers uniquely protect high-risk populations (young children, older adults and people with disabilities), it is essential that every community have access to the facts about the technology, regardless of whether or not code requirements and updates are in play.

HFSC research has shown that myths and misinformation among the homebuilding industry negatively impact both consumer choice and local sprinkler code requirements and updates. Since home fire sprinklers have been added to national model fire and residential codes, the homebuilders' national trade group has launched an aggressive and well-funded anti-sprinkler campaign. Homebuilder negativity not only undermines consumer interest; it presents a burden to the fire service. This presentation provides a review of two HFSC homebuilder education activities that helped improve understanding of home fire sprinkler education and support local fire service outreach. The first was a national survey of homebuilders. The second was a national stipend program to encourage the fire service to teach future homebuilders about fire sprinklers through vocational school outreach.

II. Process Evaluation – Implementation

HFSC developed a free, online, interactive 3D program for builders that provides a comprehensive understanding of home fire sprinkler installation. The national survey highlighted in this presentation encouraged close scrutiny by the participating builders and provided valuable feedback to HFSC. It proved that appropriate educational material is capable not only of increasing knowledge, but also influencing positive opinions about sprinkler technology within this key population.

The national stipend program helped fire departments partner with their local vocational/technical schools (future builders) to reach students with factual and age-appropriate home fire safety and sprinkler educational information. It created public education events to draw students, their families, faculty and others in the community (including local homebuilders). This is an effective way that the fire service can carry out community risk reduction, reaching a part of their constituency that may otherwise go untapped. Our documentation has shown that this program helped establish partnerships between schools and fire departments that will go on indefinitely.

III. Impact Evaluation – Short-Term Results

Three hundred and seventy-one builders reviewed the program and completed the survey. The survey demonstrated that the 3D program is effective at improving knowledge within the important homebuilder target population. Here are the results when builders were asked if the program helped them understand how home fire sprinklers work:

5 (Strongly Agree)	*4*	*3 (Neutral)*	*2*	*1 (Strongly Disagree)*
177 (48%)	*130 (35%)*	*53 (14%)*	*6 (2%)*	*4 (1%)*

Here are the results when builders were asked if the program helped them understand how home fire sprinklers are installed:

5 (Strongly Agree)	*4*	*3 (Neutral)*	*2*	*1 (Strongly Disagree)*
153 (41%)	*142 (38%)*	*64 (17%)*	*10 (3%)*	*3 (1%)*

Fire departments that participated in the vocational/tech school program completed a comprehensive evaluation that provided details about the partnership between the fire department and school, student reactions to building and viewing the demos, educational material review, results of the community event including number of people and decision-makers who attended, and media coverage. Examples from the evaluations will be used in the presentation.

IV. Outcome Evaluation – Long-Term Results

The survey shows that the free, online 3D program can serve an important role in the ongoing educational outreach to the broader homebuilding community, whether shared by HFSC or by the local fire service. The evaluations from the vocational program indicate that the program was effective in educating vocational students (potential builders) while they are young and learning the trades. Most of the schools that participated are committed and interested in continuing the program annually.

Recommendations for others: The 3D program is free of charge and available online. This survey can readily be conducted locally among homebuilders to help fire departments assess local opinions and the need for educational intervention.

We urge all fire departments to become members of the free BUILT FOR LIFE Fire Department Program (BFLFD), which provides benefits to member departments in return for their commitment to make home fire sprinklers a focus of their educational outreach. Today, more than 2,500 fire departments are signed up for the free program. HFSC maintains communication with the BFLFDs, requests their input when developing new material and continues to receive feedback about their education efforts.

Conclusions: Builder education is important to counter their efforts to spread misinformation and myths about home fire sprinklers. HFSC has developed and implemented other education programs for target audiences that also play a role in adopting codes and ordinances that require home fire sprinklers including local officials and decision-makers, water purveyors, members of the fire service and consumers. HFSC's programs collectively have resulted in increased fire sprinkler protection in homes.