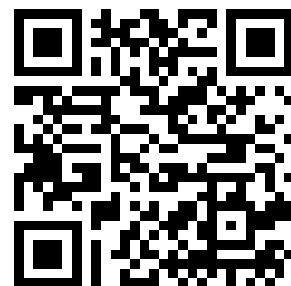


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# Fire Education and the News

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## FOREWORD

## To the Public Fire Educator

The project described in this publication is the most cost-effective way to provide vital life safety information to your community. This project is the local production of a television news fire safety mini-documentary.

Virtually every community in this country is reached by a television signal. And one of the most popular of all television programs is the local news. It seems only natural then for a fire department to work with local television not just to report a fire, but to report on how to prevent a fire.

This use of local television news programs to communicate fire and burn prevention information has proved highly successful. The fire departments that have participated in this project have significantly helped their communities and themselves.

In our complex society, the responsibilities of those who provide fire and emergency services are being increased, often without additional resources. I urge you to approach a television station in your area with this project.

Not only will you open the door to a highly responsive new resource, but you will magnify the impact of your public education program a thousand fold. For further information and assistance, contact G. Clay Hollister, Chief, Public Education Program, Office of Fire Protection Management, U.S. Fire Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Washington, D.C. 20472.

Richard Strother  
Associate Administrator  
Office of Fire Protection Management  
U. S. Fire Administration  
Federal Emergency Management Agency



## Fire Service and Television News Are Opening a New Frontier in Public Fire Education

How would you like to reach hundreds of thousands of people in your city and state with life-saving fire prevention messages....and spend a minimum of your department's tight budget?

How would you like to dramatically improve the credibility, image, and teamwork of fire departments throughout your region?

How would you like to transform hard-nosed television news reporters and producers into solid proponents of public fire education?

"Sounds too good to be true," skeptics might say. But fire departments from coast to coast are already proving that fire education and television news can mix—with phenomenal results.

The catalyst for this growing new partnership between fire educators and television news is a pilot program developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). From December 1980 through February 1982, FEMA's "Fire Education and the News" program has already involved 90 fire departments in 11 metropolitan areas from the Atlantic to the Pacific.



The purpose of this program is to take advantage of the enormous public education potential of television news and improve the relationship between the fire service and television news departments. Improved relationships are expected to lead to more in-depth fire-safety programming. At the same time, the program seeks to build cooperation and teamwork within the fire service, by encouraging fire departments in metropolitan areas to join forces and share resources in collective public education efforts.

Fire educators in cities as diverse as Detroit and Anchorage, assisted by a FEMA media consultant, offered the top-rated TV news station in their locality an opportunity to develop a series of in-depth reports, or "minidocumentary," on fire safety. Then, fire service personnel helped facilitate the production process. How did the programs turn out? "Fantastic," says a television news director.

Listen to fire service personnel who have been involved in these programs. "We're excited," says Diane Roche, fire education specialist for the Virginia Beach, Virginia Fire Department. "It was the first time that Tidewater area fire departments made an attempt to work with the media, and it turned out great." Roche led a production effort in the Norfolk, Virginia area involving seven municipal fire departments plus fire departments at three local U.S. Navy installations.

"The entire effort was exceptional," reports Lynn Oliver, deputy fire marshal with the King County, Washington Fire Marshal's Office. Oliver coordinated a production that included the Seattle Fire Department and eight other fire jurisdictions in King County.

According to Lt. Monte Brown of the Aurora, Colorado Fire Department outside Denver, "The production went like clockwork. We got the information out all over the state." Four suburban departments joined forces with the Denver Fire Department and State Fire Marshal's Office to mount this production effort.

In Los Angeles, 18 Southern California fire departments and hundreds of schools participated in the production of a five-part series aired on the number one rated news station. Captain Joe Day, who heads the education unit of the Los Angeles County Fire Department, called the series "an excellent presentation, very successful." How successful? An estimated seven million viewers watched the Los Angeles series.

Fire educators are not the only ones who are excited about the "Fire Education and the News" program. The enthusiasm has spread to television news reporters and producers involved in the productions. "Working on this series really charged us up as journalists," says Susan Hutchison of KIRO-TV in Seattle. "We felt like we were doing something that really mattered." Hutchison doesn't hesitate to point out that she is now "really tuned in to fire education. I gained a tremendous amount of knowledge that will stick with me for the rest of my life."

TV news personnel were surprised by the level of cooperation and production assistance they received from the fire service. At KMOX-TV in St. Louis, a prestigious CBS-owned and -operated station (O & O), "they were flabbergasted," says Captain Ken Hines of the Chesterfield Fire Protection District. According to Bob West, a veteran producer of news documentaries for WTKR-TV in Norfolk, "The best thing about this production was the absolutely marvelous job by the local fire departments in lining it up. They really did their homework."

All in all, says Susan Hutchison, "Working hand in hand with the fire service has been extremely beneficial. It's a good marriage."

"It's just the beginning," predicts Lynn Oliver.

## **Background of the Program**

FEMA's "Fire Education and the News" program is the latest in a series of initiatives by the U.S. Fire Administration's Public Education Program to expand the role of the news media in public fire education. The Public Education Program developed this project with Jim Vidakovich, an expert in the design and production of mass media projects. Vidakovich, working as public information officer (PIO) for the Santa Monica (CA) Fire Department, served as FEMA's prime consultant on the project. He provided vital field assistance and technical expertise to all the fire departments and television stations before, during, and after each production.

FEMA planners set five specific objectives for the program:

1. To encourage fire departments and local television stations to work together on production of in-depth news programming on fire prevention and fire safety. Programs can air as a series of reports during the evening news, or as a half-hour segment of local news magazine shows.
2. To educate the public through the use of local television news programming and resources.
3. To increase public awareness of the local fire service's joint efforts to reduce property loss, death, and injury due to fire.
4. To establish a working relationship between local fire departments and the television news media, thus paving the way for future cooperative productions.
5. To determine the effectiveness of television news as a channel for communicating fire-safety messages to the public.

"Fire Education and the News" has gone a giant step beyond previous public fire education programs involving television.

Studies have shown that television news is now the primary source of information and education for a majority of America's adult population. The local TV news broadcast thus takes on an added dimension as a vehicle for educating the public about fire safety. But until now, fire departments and the local television news media have worked together primarily on fires, emergencies, and other "hard" or "spot" news stories. Spot news coverage has been supplemented with increasing frequency by public service announcements on various fire- and life-safety topics.

Television news professionals realize the important role they can play in helping to educate the public about fire safety. "We like to do this kind of programming," says Bob Scott, assistant news director at KIMO-TV in Anchorage, Alaska. "While fire safety may not be hard news, it's important information. It has a big impact on people when you can tell them things they can do in their own homes that could save their lives." John



Davis of KGW-TV in Portland, Oregon, who anchored his station's fire-safety series, is even more emphatic: "Television in any community should be in the vanguard when it comes to shaping public opinion about fire prevention."

"Fire Education and the News" has broken new ground by stimulating in-depth TV news coverage of fire-safety subjects. The vehicle is the "minidocumentary," which covers a different aspect of an issue each evening over four or five days. Each segment usually runs two and one-half to five minutes. An alternative to a series of short reports is a single 30-minute program, which may be preferred by stations that air an "evening magazine" program. Either format can help fire educators reach a large number of people in a cost-effective manner. "It's the most cost-effective thing to hit the fire service in 50 years," says Ira Bryant, fire-safety coordinator for the Alaska State Fire Marshal's Office in Anchorage.



## How the Program Works

The "Fire Education and the News" program is being conducted under a grant from FEMA to the Illinois Fire Inspector's Association. Participating fire departments receive on-site technical assistance from a professional media consultant, as well as ongoing telephone and written consultation until the production is complete. Fees for consulting personnel are absorbed through the Illinois Fire Inspector's grant.

Participation in the program is arranged by contacting the Illinois Fire Inspector's Association or U.S. Fire Administration of FEMA. Addresses and phone numbers are included at the conclusion of this article. Since one of the goals of the program is to stimulate cooperative public education efforts by local fire departments, several fire departments in the same metropolitan area or region should collaborate on the project. Once approval for participation has been granted, the media consultant is notified and schedules a preproduction site visit with representatives from participating fire departments. Tasks to be completed during the first preproduction visit include:

- Identification of the fire problems to be covered in the series.
- Targeting of school districts and other key community groups to be involved in the production.
- Identification of the television station to be contacted about broadcasting the program. To ensure the largest viewing audience for the series, program coordinators should focus on the number one rated news station in their local television "market."
- Development of a marketing presentation aimed at the TV station news department. This describes the program, subjects to be covered, and production assistance available from local fire departments.
- Obtaining a commitment from the target television station to work in conjunction with local fire departments on the production effort.
- Development of a production plan assigning specific media assistance tasks to fire service participants.
- Design of an evaluation strategy to measure the impacts of the program on the community.

Once the game plan for the program is in place, fire service personnel and the television news crew embark on the production effort. Careful planning and scheduling is critical. Teamwork is essential.

In most cases, the program can be taped within a two-week period. Actual production costs—filming, editing, etc.—are paid for out of the TV station's news budget. On-site technical assistance from the FEMA media consultant is available during the production process.

Then, after final editing and scripting, the finished product airs on the nightly news or evening magazine program. After the broadcast, the impact and effectiveness of the production is evaluated, and potential for followup programming is determined.

"This program has been making everybody happy," observes Jim Vidakovich, the media consultant who got the project started. "It brings the fire service together, it gives the news media a professional product, and it gives the public life-saving information. Most of all, it establishes an ongoing relationship for the future."

A step-by-step guide for planning, producing, and evaluating fire-safety mini-documentaries is included later in this article. This "how-to-do-it" section is based on the experiences of the fire service organizations and television stations who worked together on the nine programs to air through November 1981.

## Program Highlights

During the past year, FEMA's "Fire Education and the News" program has reached close to 12 million television viewers from coast to coast. Of the 10 metropolitan areas involved, seven cities are in the top 25 television markets nationwide—Los Angeles, Sacramento, Portland (Oregon), Seattle, Denver, St. Louis, and Detroit.

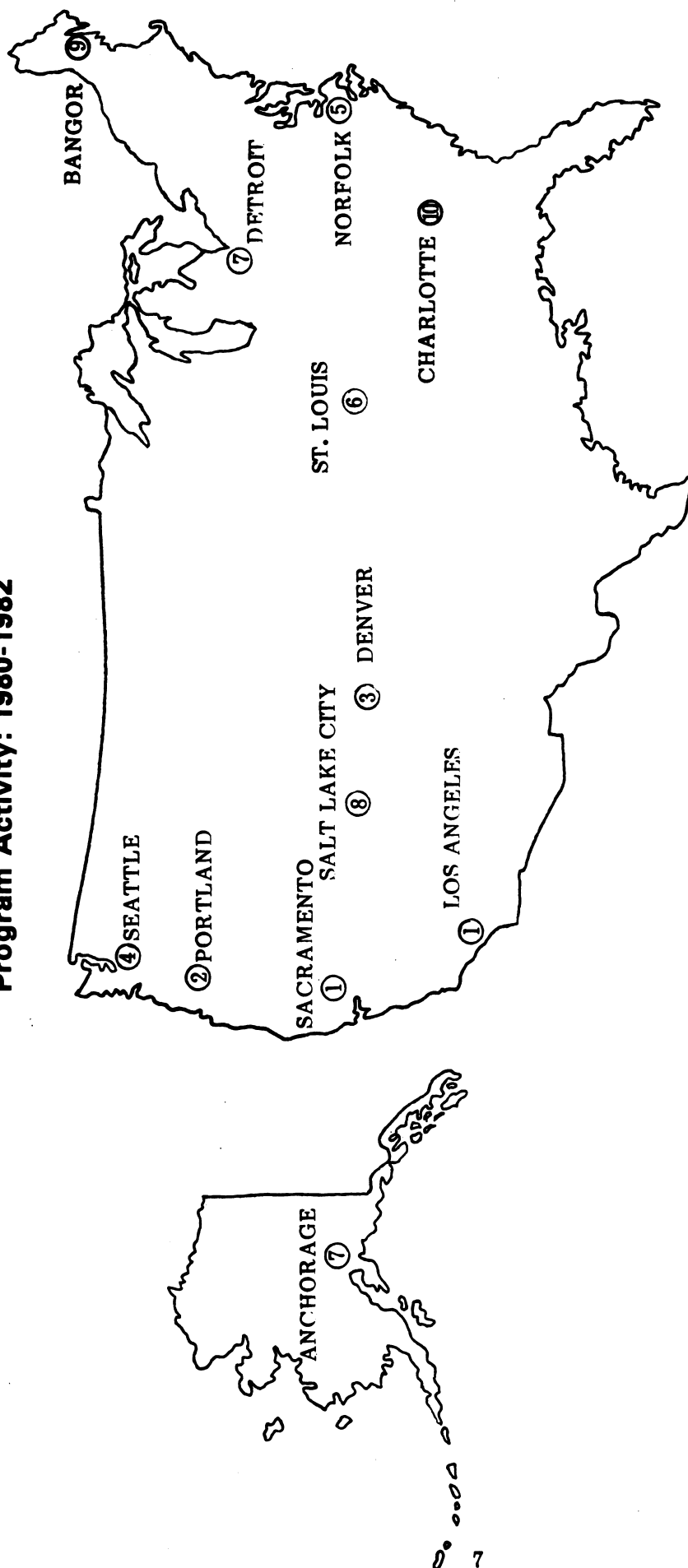
The program kicked off in December 1980 in Los Angeles and Sacramento. Three more series—Portland, Seattle, and Denver—aired in May 1981. The next three series—Norfolk and St. Louis, plus a followup in Seattle—aired in October 1981, during Fire Prevention Week. During November 1981, a five-part followup series on arson was aired in Seattle. The most recent minidocumentaries were broadcast during February 1982 in Salt Lake City, Utah; Bangor, Maine; and Charlotte, North Carolina.

These programs have done a lot more than build cooperation within the fire service and improve relationships with the television news media. There have been other positive results:

- Hundreds of local school districts have been involved in the programs, assigning selected grades from the elementary through junior high levels to watch the series. Feedback from teachers has been overwhelmingly favorable. Results of pre- and post-tests in the classrooms showed a definite increase in knowledge about fire safety.
- More than 5,000 home fire-safety checklists were distributed by TV stations in six of the cities.
- TV news ratings improved dramatically during the series. In Portland, for example, viewership increased 18% during the week the fire-safety series aired. In most of the cities, programs were broadcast during rating periods and were heavily promoted.
- Direct dollar cost to local fire departments to date is virtually zero, and little direct labor cost has been required.

Presented below are profiles of the nine "Fire Safety and the News" series to air during the first year of the program.

# **Fire Education and the News Program Activity: 1980-1982**



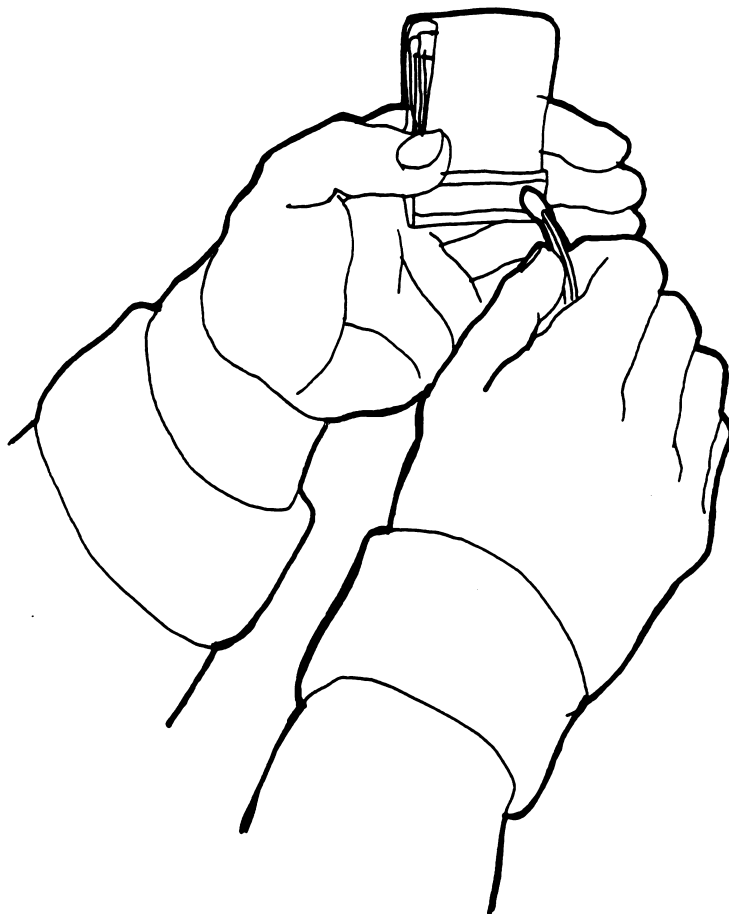
## **AIR DATES**

- ① December 15-19, 1980.
- ② May 4-8, 1981.
- ③ May 11-15, 1981.
- ④ May 18-22, 1981, plus followups in October and November 1981.
- ⑤ October 4-8, 1981.
- ⑥ October 5-9, 1981.
- ⑦ November 9-13, 1981.
- ⑧ February 15-19, 1982
- ⑨ February 1-12, 1982.
- ⑩ February 8-12, 1982.



## Los Angeles(KABC-TV)

- Dates: December 15-19, 1980.
- Market: Los Angeles is the second largest television market in the United States, trailing only New York City. KABC-TV is the number one rated news station in southern California.
- Format: "It Can Happen to You" was a five-part series of five- to six-minute segments aired on the 6:00 p.m. news.
- Highlights: The series was seen by an estimated seven million viewers. Ratings went up sharply during the week. A home safety checklist offered by the station was requested by approximately 1,000 viewers. According to program coordinator Larry Marshburn of the Huntington Beach Fire Department, 18 Los Angeles-area fire departments were involved—the first time this many departments worked together on a cooperative project of this scope. Marshburn says the well-developed network of Southern California Fire Prevention Officers facilitated contacts with area fire departments and helped ensure maximum impact. Grades three to five in hundreds of elementary schools were contacted to watch the



hundreds of elementary schools were contacted to watch the series. Pre- and post-testing documented an educational gain among students who were required to watch the series. In a widely publicized incident, one school age child credited the series with teaching him to react properly in a fire that otherwise would have taken his life. The series was nominated for Golden Mic and local Emmy awards, and won UPI honors.

- Followup: KABC produced a followup arson series aired April 15-17, 1981, with an estimated one million viewers.

## **Sacramento (KCRA-TV)**

- Dates: December 15-19, 1980
- Market: Sacramento is a top 25 television market. KCRA-TV is the number one news station in the area, reaching San Francisco.
- Format: "Home Fire Safety" was a five-part series of three- to four-minute segments aired on the 5:30 p.m. news.
- Highlights: The series was seen by an estimated 237,000 viewers. The station offered 500 fire-safety checklists, and all were requested. Program coordinators reported that fire departments and elementary schools throughout the Sacramento area were involved. Local fire officials say the relationship between the fire service and the media is much improved, with more emphasis on fire stories than ever before.
- Followup: Two area fire departments have begun public education campaigns since the series.

## **Portland (KGW-TV)**

- Dates: May 4-8, 1981
- Market: Portland is the twenty-third largest market in the United States.
- Format: "Fire—Your Place or Mine" was a five-part series aired in five- to six-minute segments on the early evening news.
- Highlights: The series was watched by an estimated 90,000 households. Ratings went up 18% the week of the series. Program coordinators Don Mayer of the Portland Fire Bureau and Roger Neil of the State Fire Marshal's Office reported that 15 fire departments were involved in the production, including departments as far away as Salem (50 miles) and Eugene (100 miles). Elementary school grades four to six were specially

requested to watch the series. According to newsman John Davis, almost 4,000 home fire-safety checklists were distributed.

- Followup: KGW produced a "Stop, Drop, and Roll" 30-second public service announcement (PSA) from footage shot for the production. The station recently aired a special fire-safety segment on chimneys and home heating equipment, Davis says.

## **Denver (KBTv)**

- Dates: May 11-15, 1981
- Market: Denver is the twenty-first largest market in America. KBTv is the top rated news station in Colorado. Its signal is also aired in South Dakota and Montana via cable.
- Format: "Playing with Fire" was a five-night series aired in two segments each evening on the 5 p.m. news (2-1/2 minutes) and 10 p.m. telecast (1-3/4 minutes).
- Highlights: Estimated audiences were 110,000 households for the early evening news and 210,000 households for the late program. Monte Brown of the Aurora Fire Department reports that five fire departments in and around Denver were directly involved in the production, although departments all over the state were asked by the State Fire Marshal's Association to help promote the series in the schools. Emphasis statewide was on grades seven to nine; in the immediate Denver area, departments focused on the primary grades. Pre- and post-tests were conducted. Six hundred safety checklists were requested. Commenting on the public response, Brown says, "It's been crazy. We can hardly keep up. The awareness carried right through the summer to Fire Prevention Week."
- Followup: KBTv followed up the series with an opinion poll on smoke detector use. Since then, a rival Denver station has aired a minidocumentary on smoke detectors. Another spinoff is a new statewide newsletter published by the State Fire Marshal's Association. Brown says plans are being developed to approach stations with a proposal for a new program on the anti-arson campaign being conducted by the Colorado Arson Task Force.

## Seattle (KIRO-TV)

- Dates: May 18-22, 1981
- Market: Seattle is the fifteenth largest market in the nation. KIRO-TV is the number one rated news station in the state, with an estimated audience of 912,000 viewers plus cable coverage in eastern Washington.
- Format: "Learn Not to Burn" was a five-part series of 3-1/2-minute segments on the 5 p.m. news show. The series was broadcast over a six-day period, Monday through Saturday (the Thursday segment was preempted by a major local news story on a ferry strike).
- Highlights Estimated audience for the series averaged 220,000 households for the week, with a peak of 320,000 households on Wednesday night. Several hundred fire-safety checklists were distributed. Lynn Oliver of the King County Fire Marshal's Office says nine Seattle-area departments were directly involved in the five-part series, while a total of 36 fire departments and fire districts helped promote the series in 18 Seattle-area school systems. "The community saw a united fire service," says Oliver. Two King County fire departments, Kirkland and Redmond, cooperated in surveying teachers in the school district they share and received positive feedback. KIRO is making free copies of the video tape of the series available to all fire departments and school districts in King County.
- Followup: KIRO turned the series into a 30-minute special that aired October 8. Additional information in this program included proper reporting of a fire, holiday fire safety, and a historical note on Fire Prevention Week. According to Oliver, 11 fire departments participated in this followup production. In a more recent followup, November 16-20, KIRO aired a five-part series on arson on the 5:00 p.m. news. This series featured an interview with an arsonist. So far, more than two dozen copies of the initial series have been distributed to local school districts and fire departments. Two major Seattle-area employers, Weyerhaeuser and Pacific Northwest Bell, scrapped their existing employee education programs on fire safety and are now using the "Learn Not to Burn" video tape. Oliver says she plans to use the video tapes in her ongoing public education activities.

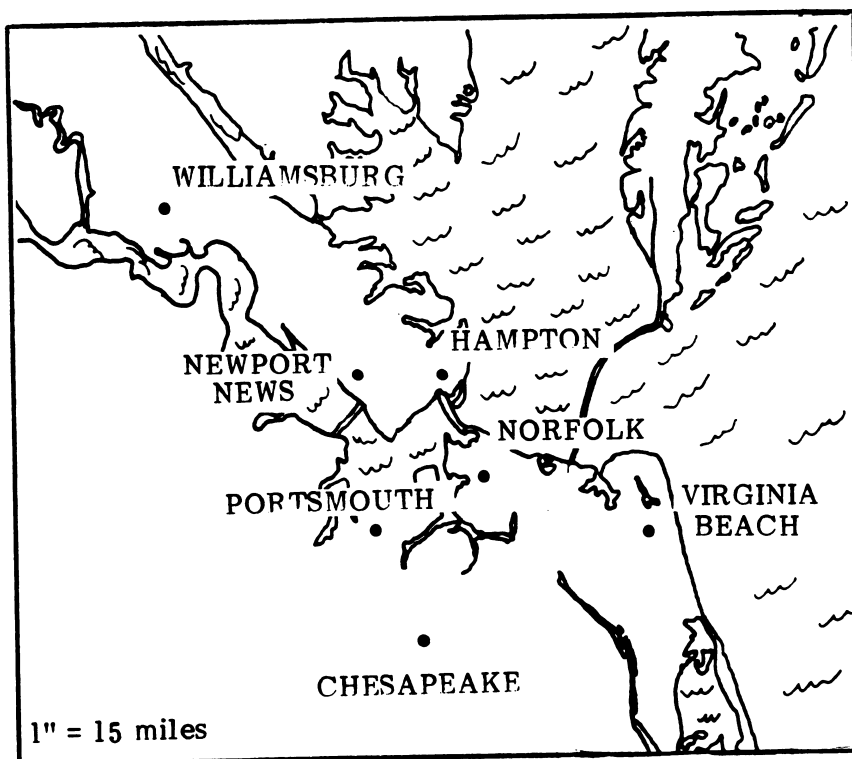
## Norfolk (WTKR-TV)

- Dates: October 4-8, 1981
- Market: The Norfolk area, with a total viewership of over 1.3 million people, is a top 50 market. WTKR-TV has been the top rated



news station in the Tidewater region since it went on the air in 1949.

- Format: "Epidemic...Fire" aired as a 30-minute news special on October 4. The 1/2-hour program was supplemented by a four-part "miniseries" aired later in the week on Wednesday and Thursday (two segments were broadcast each night, one on the 6:00 p.m. news and the other at 11:00 p.m.)
- Highlights: Although the station was not in a rating period, producer Bob West reports an "above normal response" to the program. Seven Tidewater-area fire departments over a 50-mile radius, plus the fire departments at the Norfolk, Little Creek, and Oceana naval installations, participated in the production. According to program coordinator Diane Roche, this level of fire service cooperation and teamwork was unprecedented in this region. Roche also reports "good cooperation" from school systems in the seven jurisdictions, with pre- and post-testing in several communities.



Seven Tidewater-area fire departments, plus three military bases, worked together to develop a fire-safety minidocumentary that aired the week of October 4, 1981. It was the first time Tidewater fire departments had joined forces to work with the local news media.

- Followup: After the series, the U.S. Navy's weekly newspaper for all personnel in the Tidewater area, Soundings, published a survey form on fire safety for readers to fill out and return. Data on this survey have not yet been released. Roche reports that plans are in the works for a future documentary on juvenile firesetters. Bob West of WTKR says the station is interested in following up on fire-safety programs in local schools.

## **St. Louis (KMOX-TV)**

- Dates: October 5-8, 1981
- Market: St. Louis is the seventeenth largest market in the nation. KMOX is the number one news station, leading the early evening ratings and tied for first at 10:00 p.m.
- Format: "Fire: The Killer You Can Control" was a four-part series of two- to two and one-half-minute segments aired on the 5:00 p.m. news.
- Highlights: An estimated 168,000 viewers saw the series. Captain Ken Hines of the suburban Chesterfield Fire Protection District reports that 11 metropolitan area fire departments were involved in the production. The St. Louis County Fire Marshal's Association encouraged area fire departments to participate. Five school districts participated in the program with the emphasis directed at fifth graders. An evaluation questionnaire distributed to teachers will provide data on the impact of the series on student awareness levels.
- Followup: Demand from schools and condominium complexes for fire-safety programs is up sharply since the series. Hines says plans for a followup program, possibly on arson, will be firmed up over the next couple of months.

## **Anchorage (KIMO-TV)**

- Dates: November 9-13, 1981
- Market: Although Anchorage itself is not a major television market (172nd in the country), KIMO-TV has a statewide audience via a satellite hookup of 300,000. The station, which reaches approximately 200 communities throughout the state, is the dominant news station in Alaska. This market was included in the "Fire Education and the News" program because Alaska's fire death rate, in spite of a recent slight decline, is still the highest in the nation, per capita.

- Format: "Special Report: Fire Safety" was a five-part series aired on KIMO's regular nightly newscast and its satellite-fed Alaska Statewide News. The opening segment ran two and one-half minutes; the rest 2:15.
- Highlights: Bob Scott, assistant news director at KIMO, says the program was the most extensive news series in terms of resources allocated and depth of coverage his station has ever produced. Ira Bryant, fire-safety coordinator for the State Fire Marshal's Office, said the program was "the peak of a public education effort that has been building over the last three years." During the past year, Alaska fire deaths have dropped 38% and, says Bryant flatly, "Public education is the cause." Bryant's office worked together with the Anchorage Fire Department in developing the program, although fire departments all over the state were notified about the series in advance. School superintendents statewide were also contacted ahead of time via the state telecommunication network, and were provided with classroom discussion materials. Bryant says the program could have reached as many as 40,000 Alaskan school children in both the primary and secondary grades.
- Followup: Bryant reports that a video tape composite of the program is being made available to fire departments and schools all over the state; 15 tapes have been requested by local school districts so far. KIMO is editing outtakes from the initial series into a followup fire-safety segment to be aired in the near future on its statewide news magazine show.

## **Detroit (WXYZ-TV)**

- Dates: November 9-13, 1981
- Market: Detroit is the seventh largest market in the country. WXYZ is the city's leading news station. The station's signal is also picked up in neighboring Ontario, Canada, and northern Ohio.
- Format: "Fire Safety" was a five-part series of three-minute reports aired on the 6:00 p.m. news.
- Highlights: An estimated 501,000 people in the Detroit metro area watched the series (Canadian and Ohio viewers are not included in this total). Chief Sam Dixon of the Detroit Fire Department coordinated the program, and received production help from the Westland and Troy (MI) fire departments. Prior to the series, Captain Joe Benyo of Westland contacted the Michigan board of school superintendents about the program, and he estimates that as many as 50 local school systems within a 70-mile radius of Detroit were notified. The program was aimed at elementary grades (K-6); schools are generally reporting an increase in fire-safety knowledge and awareness.

- Followup:

Benyo is editing the series plus outtakes into a 30-minute video tape for use in ongoing public education efforts. The tape will be publicized through the statewide arson newsletter, published by the State Fire Marshal's Office; if fire departments send a blank tape, Benyo will dub it free of charge. Followup opportunities with WXYZ are being explored. Local fire departments are "enthused" about the program and are busy responding to requests for followup programs from various community groups and local corporations. For example, GM Diesel has asked for a fire-safety program for its employees.





## Putting it a Putting It All Together

What are the key factors that have led to the success of the "Fire Education in the News" programs? What are the pitfalls to avoid? This section offers tips from program coordinators and TV news professionals on how to put together a successful fire-safety minidocumentary in your metropolitan area.

## Getting Organized

Get as many local jurisdictions as possible involved in the production effort. A program like this is a great opportunity for the fire service to put together a wide cooperative effort, and lay the groundwork for future collaborative efforts.

"Don't try to do it yourself," Larry Marshburn warns. "You won't be as successful. You need the base."

Marshburn says he started plugging the program during the planning stages at the monthly meetings of the Southern California Fire Prevention Officers Section (of the California Fire Chiefs Association). The existing network gave him access to "unlimited resources, experts, contacts with 60 to 70 fire departments in the region," says Marshburn. "We had so many people to draw from, we were able to set things up instantly."

Marshburn recommends that fire departments think about establishing a regional public education committee before they even consider tackling the challenge of developing a new television minidocumentary. Marshburn was Chairman of the Public Safety Education Committee of the Southern California Fire Prevention Officers Section.

"Establish a planning mechanism," Marshburn says. "Use the planning team to collect data; determine state, county, and city fire problems; and identify resources. Once you've identified the problems, set goals and objectives."

Diane Roche of Virginia Beach agrees that being well-organized is a primary success factor. She says using the committee approach "makes it easier to tap into each community." Like Marshburn, Roche thinks having the "blessing" of the area fire chiefs organization is important. However, Roche didn't have the established base to draw on. "It was the first time local fire departments had worked together," she said. "There was no prior relationship." Roche said she first identified supporters within the Tidewater Association of Fire Chiefs, sounded them out to get their feelings on the feasibility of the idea, and then held a series of meetings where she presented the concept. "The response was great," says Roche. "That opened the door."

In the Denver area, Monte Brown also had to break down a few barriers before that program could get rolling. In the long run, though, Brown says the program helped to "cement" relationships. "Cooperation was already established on the fire marshal level," Brown says. "We had a baseline public education relationship we could build on. We had been in the schools with a full gamut of public education programs."

"It takes commitment from the fire chief," adds Tony DiDomenico, public information officer for the Los Angeles City Fire Department. "And the chief has to have faith in the department's public education people."

Ira Bryant of the Alaska State Fire Marshal's Office suggests that when assigning responsibility for coordination of this type of program, "find one person within your department who is totally committed to the concept that public fire education can and

does work." "The worst thing," he warns, "is to give it to someone who thinks it's a waste of time." In other words, don't rely on a fire combat veteran with no public education experience. "It takes specialized people," says Bryant.

Once baseline support is established, project coordinators should allow no less than 30 calendar days for planning. "We geared up for a month, making contacts and setting up events," says Lynn Oliver. Ira Bryant in Anchorage also reports a 30-day preparation period.

## Reaching Out to the Media

The impact and effectiveness of the "Fire Education in the News" program depends largely on the rapport established during the initial contact with the TV station. "Cooperation is the name of the game," says Tony DiDomenico. "If you can get that, you're 80% of the way there." John Davis of KGW-TV in Portland agrees: "If a cooperative relationship can be established between the fire service and the TV news operation, the series should come off easily."

First, do some background research on the TV stations in your area. Check the latest Arbitron or Nielsen rating surveys. Determine which station has the news program with the largest viewing audience—that is, the number one news show in the viewing "market." Approach this station first.



"Don't be afraid to go in there and ask," says Lynn Oliver.

"Fire officials have to realize that they have just as much access to TV as any other organization," says John Davis. "Don't be intimidated."

But before you make contact, develop a preproduction plan. It is a good idea to put together several alternative program proposals, so you're not locked into one approach. "The station may not be willing to do a five-part series," warns Diane Roche, who was told by WTKR-TV that there was "no way" the station could allot that much time to a fire-safety minidocumentary on the nightly news. An alternative turned out to be a 30-minute program on WTKR's weekly "Newsmakers" program. The station later found out that it had so much extra good-quality footage that it decided to broadcast four additional segments on the evening news later that week. Larry Marshburn says KABC-TV in Los Angeles initially wanted to air only a three-part series on a lower rated 4 p.m. news show, which was much less than the fire service wanted. "After they shot the first segment, they liked it so well they decided to make it a week-long series and switched it to 6 p.m.," Marshburn says.

After a production plan has been established, make phone contact with the TV station you've selected and set up a meeting with the news department. You will most likely be dealing with the news director, director of public affairs, or assignment editor.

"Have your act ready," says Joe Day, education chief of the Los Angeles County Fire Prevention Division. "Be prepared with ideas," says Lynn Oliver, "and think visual."

"Don't go in with your hands in your pockets, not sure about what to say," says Ken Hines. "Have a quality presentation ready. A good marketing presentation, full of facts and figures about the local fire problem, is essential."

"You have to be able to sell the station on the idea. You have to demonstrate a need," says Ira Bryant.

"Be prepared to answer any and all questions," says Joe Benyo. Benyo suggests taking along a videotape of one of the programs aired in another city.

Susan Hutchison of KIRO-TV describes the station's initial meeting with the fire service. "The fire people came to us and said they would do a lot of the footwork," Hutchison recalls. "We went over their outline and it excited us." Hutchison said it was a big plus to see a video tape of a previous minidocumentary. "We could see how good this story can be," she says.

"We can be very receptive when the concept is sold to us right," says Bob West of WTKR in Norfolk. "Just be up front about the whole idea—here's a problem, we need your help, and we will cooperate with you. And never use the word 'publicity'."

"The key factor for us was learning how bad the fire problem is in Alaska," says Bob Scott of KIMO-TV in Anchorage. "Make sure you have some numbers to show how bad your local fire problem is."

"KABC could see what we were trying to accomplish," says Tony DiDomenico. "They saw the opportunity to get out there with a news program that would be beneficial to the community at large. They saw that their cooperation was sorely needed."

Another key to getting a television station to agree to do a series, according to Larry Marshburn, is to make it look easy. "They don't want to spend a lot of time and money. In our presentation, we said we would do all the dirty work. We would set up all the film locations, schedule all the interviews, essentially write and produce the whole show. All we would need is a camera person and an anchor person."

"We did all the work," says Ken Hines. "All they had to do was tape."

Another key point to remember is that you have to be able to approach the media on their terms. "Take the time to learn a little bit about the TV news business," says Marshburn. "Make sure you can talk their language." Says Susan Hutchison, "Have someone who either knows about TV, or is willing to learn."

This is where FEMA's media consultant plays a key role. "The success of the program depends on the fire service and media consultant working together as a team," says Jim Vidakovich. He strongly recommends that fire personnel make full use of the expert technical assistance available through the program.

A final point to consider about reaching out to the media is exclusivity. In St. Louis, Ken Hines says fire representatives went to all three stations in town "to get a feel for who was interested. We weren't sure if the program would sell or not." As it turned out, all three stations wanted the series. As a result, when an agreement was reached with top-rated KMOX, a rival station became upset. According to Hines, it took a couple of months for the relationship between this station and the fire service to return to normal. In retrospect, advises Hines, "Deal with one station only."

## **Producing the Series**

The key to a successful production effort, according to Joe Benyo, is "total support and cooperation. Bend over backwards to establish and maintain rapport." In Detroit, says Benyo, "the TV people couldn't believe how much help they got from the fire service." In several cities fire personnel allowed their homes, even their families, to be used as "sets" and subjects for the productions.

Benyo stresses the importance of maintaining close contact throughout the production effort. "Make sure you show continued interest," he says. "Keep daily contact by phone and don't forget to maintain a physical presence."

There is a tendency, Benyo warns, "to let the TV station run the show. But they need technical assistance." Susan Hutchison of KIRO-TV says it was beneficial to have one person (Lynn Oliver) stick with them throughout the production. "She had the time to learn about our business, that you need visuals, that you don't fill a report with talking heads," Hutchison says.

Fire service personnel, because of their sensitivity to the fire problem, can add to the impact of the scenes being filmed. Joe Benyo explains that he was able to convince the WXYZ film crew to move an interview with a burn victim outside the hospital, with its clinical setting and reminders of pain and trauma, to a nearby lakeside park. Once outside, the burn patient, who had been nervous and uncommunicative, opened up and told a moving story for the cameras about her experience.

Another important part of the technical assistance process, according to Roche, is "being persistent. Hammer at the station to find out what they want. Be crystal clear on their technical requirements."



KCRA/TV  
FIRE SAFETY

Segment 1  
Kitchen Fire Safety

VIDEO

FADE UP on wide shot of dispatch office—Incoming call.

CUT to dispatcher answering the call.

CUT to interior of station. Pick up firefighters getting ready to respond. Engine leaving Station Code 3.

CUT to KCRA stock fire footage.

DISSOLVE to reporter. Suggest IN-STUDIO or kitchen location.

AUDIO

(DISPATCH OFFICE AUDIO)

DISPATCHER

Sacramento Fire Department.....What is the address of the emergency?...your phone number...(BEEP TONE TO ALERT STATIONS)....Attention....structure fire ...E-1; E-2;...Kitchen Fire...(Give the address)...Kitchen Fire...(Repeat Address).

REPORTER (VO)

Fire is one of our Nation's major problems. Each year it causes thousands of deaths, hundreds of thousands of injuries, and billions of dollars of property loss....In fact fires cause nearly 7,600 deaths and 28,000 injuries each year. Property loss from home fires totals more than two billion dollars.... Fires kill more children each year than any other accident...about 1,300 deaths each year....A child is seriously burned every four minutes....

REPORTER

I'm \_\_\_\_\_ and this week we are going to be taking an in-depth look at what can be done to prevent a serious or tragic fire from occurring in your home...In tonight's segment we will be discussing one of the leading causes of fire in the home....kitchen fires.

One way to "sell" TV news departments on doing a fire-safety mini-documentary is to show them you know how their medium works. Demonstrate your "savvy" by showing them a page or two of a sample script. An example is shown above.

But there is a fine line between too little and too much technical assistance. "Don't imagine you're part of the crew," advises Diane Roche. "Stay out of the way, keep your people in line. Let the TV people do what they have to do." Roche admits she was told to "get out of the way a few times."

The production phase is where careful planning makes the difference. According to Monte Brown, "It takes a concerted effort by several departments. Each department should have specific tasks and responsibilities to carry out." In Denver, fire and TV representatives sat down together two weeks ahead of time and went over the basic format, outline, and schedule. "They were happy with it," says Brown. "The production went off just as outlined."

Project coordinators should allow between one and two weeks to film the series. In most cities, filming took less than a week. In Anchorage, filming took only three days. In any case, the television station should have the final say on all matters relating to timing and schedule.

In lining up the production schedule, focus on fire problems that will be interesting to the TV audience as well as newsworthy. Ideas for segments include: burns and scalds, kitchen fires, careless smoking, smoke detectors and family escape planning, wood-stove safety, holiday fire safety, hotel and high-rise fire safety, combatting arson, etc. Graphic footage can be effective if used discreetly.

Susan Hutchison in Seattle says, "It really helped that fire departments were willing to stage events for us." In Seattle, events included a car fire, hose lay, training fires, interviews with arsonists, a tour of a hotel for a demonstration of high-rise fire safety, home fire drills, and firehouse alarm scenes with bells ringing, firefighters sliding down the poles, and trucks racing out of the station.

Shown below is a rundown of the "shooting schedule" for the Norfolk program. It illustrates the range of fire-safety topics that can be covered over the course of one week. In this case, events were filmed in towns scattered over a 50-mile radius.

## **Monday**

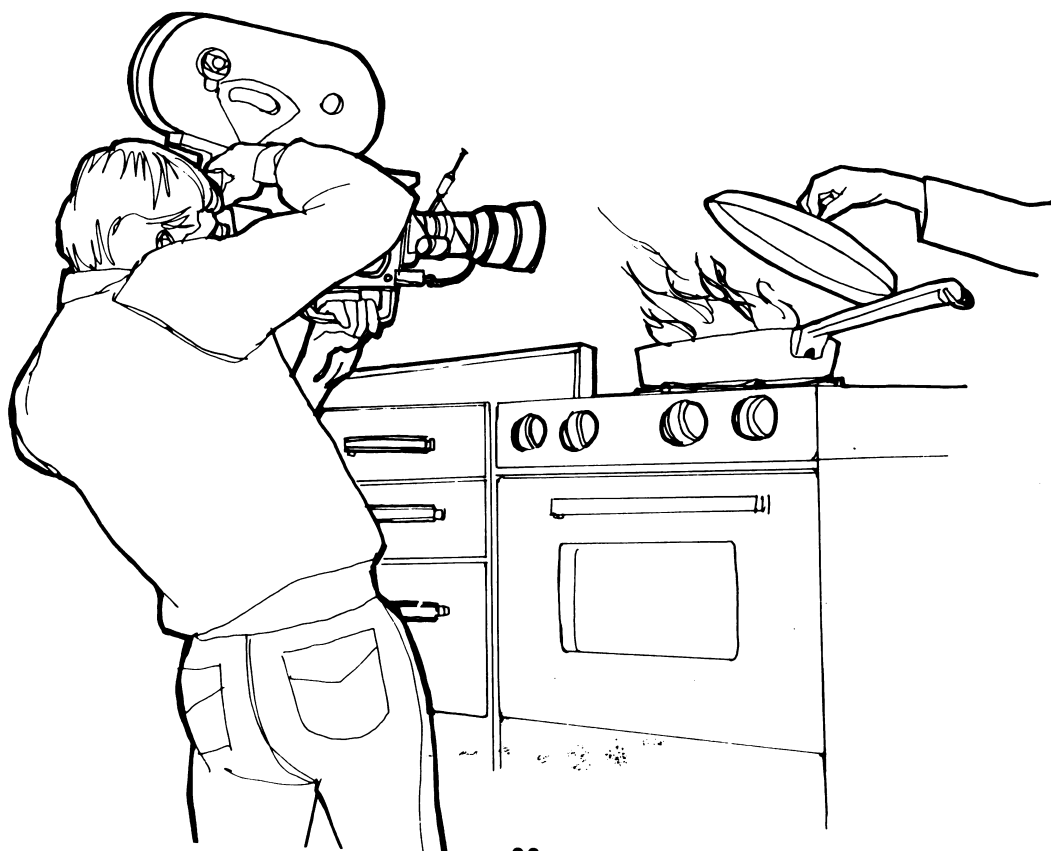
- Fire lieutenant demonstrates responding to an emergency fire call.
- Fire inspector demonstrates proper use of portable fire extinguishers, and conducts tabletop demonstration showing the explosive power of flammable liquids.
- Interview with a homeowner who saved his house from a kitchen fire using fire extinguishers bought at the insistence of his 10-year-old daughter.
- School principal conducts a fire drill.
- Fire education specialist and firefighter demonstrate how to teach fire safety to kindergarten and fifth grade classrooms.
- Interview and demonstration on smoke detectors.
- Family simulates escape planning and holds a home fire drill.
- Demonstration of the proper way to put out a grease fire, and how to avoid scald injuries in the home.

## Tuesday

- Crew films a training exercise in which a vacant building is burned. Fire chief supervises.
- Simulation of a couch ignited by a cigarette.
- Fire inspector demonstrates what to do if caught in a fire away from home. Hotel and movie theaters are used to set the scene.
- Interviews with doctor and head nurse in charge of burn unit at area General Hospital.
- Interviews with burn victims.
- Interview with doctor in charge of children's ward of a community mental health center. Doctor is treating several juvenile firesetters.

## Wednesday

- Interview with fire chief about kitchen fires.
- Fire department inspector leads demonstration of how improper installation of woodburning devices can cause fires. Interviews with store owner, local building official, a chimney sweep, and a local resident who lost his home due to improper installation.
- Interview with a local resident who caused a bad fire by starting a fire in a fireplace with a flammable liquid.





- Fire inspector simulates a fire call coming into the fire department communication center. Fire chief is interviewed about the benefits of home hazard inspections. Visit to a nearby home where fire inspector has simulated common household fire hazards.
- Visit to a local home for interview with a mother and father who lost their 14-year-old son in a fire. Back at the fire station, interview with a youth who was badly burned while playing with matches.

## **Thursday**

- Interview with fire chiefs of Norfolk, Little Creek, and Oceana Naval Bases about the U.S. Navy's success with smoke detectors.
- Interview with a couple about a high-rise fire that hospitalized them. Fire education specialist demonstrates high-rise escape procedures.

One way to maximize the chances for a successful production is to work with the right TV news reporter. "Look for a reporter who has a penchant for graphic, action-oriented stories," suggests John Davis. Better yet, aim for a reporter who has done fire-related stories. In Los Angeles, KABC reporter Tawney Little was the most appropriate

choice to anchor the series. Not only was she experienced at reporting fire and other public-safety stories, but she had been in a fire that killed three people (she was in the same building and escaped unharmed). Says Larry Marshburn, "She had a real interest in the fire problem, and she conveyed." In Detroit, WXYZ consumer reporter Phyllis Eliasberg became so wound up in the series that she let film crews use her house as the setting of several home fire-safety sequences.

After the minidocumentary has been taped, the TV station will need a week or so to edit the tapes, develop final scripts, and get the finished product ready for broadcast. The fire department coordinator should continue to offer technical assistance during the final production phase. In fact, one of the most critical stages of the entire production process, according to Larry Marshburn, is film/tape editing. "It's a painstaking process," he says. Marshburn feels that tape editing can be the difference between a good program and a great program.

"Stay on their backs," advises Ken Hines. "Don't let them lose the point of the fire message."

## **Generating Community Interest**

Extensive promotion before the series airs is an absolute must for creating community interest in the production and therefore heightening impact of the program's fire safety messages. Promotional messages should be directed at the local fire services, local radio and newspapers, area schools, and key community groups. Promotional activities should start no later than two weeks before the program airs. Here are some examples of how fire departments involved in the "Fire Education and the News" program handled advance publicity:

- In Norfolk, a press release prepared by the Virginia Beach Fire Department was distributed to over 600 community organizations, plus local newspapers, military papers, and radio stations.
- In Detroit, fire service personnel contacted local radio stations and made special promotional appearances on TV.
- In Anchorage, the state fire marshal's office sent a news release to radio stations and newspapers statewide. All Alaska fire departments were also notified in advance. And, all school superintendents in the state were alerted to the program via the Alaska Communications Network.
- In Seattle, an advance news release led to an article about the program in the Seattle Times, a major metropolitan daily newspaper.
- In Denver, fire personnel sent out press releases to local papers and stepped up public education networking in local schools.

Of course, television stations have a vested interest in promoting their own product. Advance publicity by the TV station has the greatest impact on the local community when it comes to drumming up interest in the production. One basic form of TV promotion is a program listing in the local edition of TV Guide. In Denver, KBTV took out a half-page ad in TV Guide.

# Learn not to burn...

This week on Eyewitness News at five, Susan Hutchison presents a five part special report on fire safety in your home or office.

In addition, Channel 7 will send you a "Home Fire Safety Plan" free to check your home against fire hazards. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Fire Safety  
KIRO-TV  
3rd & Broad  
Seattle, WA 98121

Send for your "Home Fire Safety Plan" today and watch Susan Hutchison's special report, **Learn Not To Burn**, this week on Eyewitness News at 5:00 p.m.

**Eyewitness News**  
**The News Specialist**



To ensure the largest possible viewing audience, encourage the TV station to run promotional ads in major daily newspapers and in the local TV guide. Supplement this advertising with your own news release.

There is a greater likelihood of heavy promotion by the TV station if the mini-documentary is aired during a rating period, known in the broadcast industry as a "sweep" period. In Seattle, for example, KIRO-TV and a rival station were locked in a ratings battle when "Learn Not to Burn" was broadcast during a May 1981 sweep period. KIRO ran ads in the big Seattle newspapers and aired special "promos" on radio and television.

The programs in Portland, St. Louis, and Denver also aired during rating "sweeps," and were heavily advertised and promoted. KGW-TV in Portland produced a 30-second promotional spot. Monte Brown says KBTB in Denver "went all out" in promoting that series, supplementing its ad in TV Guide with 30-second radio promos starting two weeks before the broadcast, plus extensive newspaper advertising. KBTB also encouraged its big advertising accounts to plug the show; one Denver-area chainstore made a promotional announcement about the series part of its smoke detector displays.

Perhaps the most interesting promotional strategy used by a TV station was employed by WXYZ-TV in Detroit. The station had run three promos the week before the series aired (Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday nights just before the start of the 6 p.m. news). But on the following Monday, the night of the first segment, two children were killed in a house fire. The station used this breaking news to plug the series on Tuesday during the noon and 5 p.m. news, and again just before the 6 p.m. show. "They might have been saved—learn how you can save yourself if a fire strikes your home," was the message.

In summary, the most effective promotion of fire-safety minidocumentaries combines TV station advertising with fire service public information releases and networking activity. And, by scheduling the program so that it airs during a rating period, fire departments can be sure that community interest will be at a peak, thanks to even more intense TV promotion.

## Evaluating Impact

Four indicators can be used to measure the impact of a television minidocumentary on fire safety:

- Educational change: Changes in community awareness, knowledge, and behavior.
- Institutional Change: Changes in fire department program objectives, personnel, or budgets to support public education programs targeted at behavioral change, risk, or loss reduction; improvements in the relationship between the local fire service and the news media; improvements in the relationship among local fire departments; and improvements in the relationship between the fire departments and other municipal offices.
- Risk Reduction: Changes in the environment which reduce either the risk of fire or the probable extent of fire loss.
- Loss Reduction: Reduction in fire incidence, property loss, injuries, and deaths.

Provided below are examples from "Fire Education in the News" program cities to illustrate each of these evaluation indicators.



# PLEASE IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE IMMEDIATE

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION  
CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH, 23456  
TELEPHONE (804) 427-4111

## FIRE SAFETY WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN KILL YOU

Do you and your family know what to do in case of a fire? On Sunday, October 4, 1981 WTKR-TV's "Newsmakers" (Channel 3) will air a program which will deal with methods of home fire prevention, detection of fire hazards within the home and home and commercial escape plans. "Newsmakers" airs at 6:30 p.m. This program was developed by the Tidewater area fire departments in conjunction with the Federal Emergency Management Agency - U.S. Fire Administration.

The program is devoted to raising the public's awareness of fire safety and will serve as the kick-off for Fire Prevention Week, October 4-10, 1981. This program demonstrates fire prevention methods, interviews victims of fire and discusses local problems with Tidewater authorities.

Addresses will be provided during the program where citizens can obtain additional information on home fire safety plans, however Tidewater residents are encouraged to contact their local fire departments at any time for fire safety information.

PML:kh  
9/17/81

TV publicity should be supplemented by your own public information release. Shown above is a sample release sent to over 600 organizations in the Tidewater, Virginia area.

## **Educational Change**

All cities report anecdotal examples of awareness changes among the local community. For example:

- In Norfolk, Diane Roche says followup phone calls, requests for additional material on fire safety, and one-to-one contacts with the public indicate that "we got the message out."
- In Detroit, Joe Benyo says local fire departments are swamped with requests for followup fire education programs.
- In Seattle, two major companies—Weyerhaeuser and Pacific Northwest Bell—have scrapped in-house fire education programs and are replacing them with a tape of the "Learn Not to Burn" series. There have been more than two dozen requests for the tape from schools and fire departments.
- In Portland, Oregon, 2,000 fire-safety checklists offered by KGW-TV were snatched up by the public, and 2,000 more had to be printed to meet the demand.
- In Los Angeles, "There was quite a response," according to Joe Day of L.A. County. Larry Marshburn in Huntington Beach says reaction from the public shows "a real increase in awareness."
- The most sensational example of educational change directly attributable to one of the series occurred in Los Angeles, where a school-age child was able to save himself from a potentially fatal fire because of what he "saw on TV."

Educational impact in the schools is best measured through formalized pre- and post-tests. In Southern California, the City of Covina did the most extensive pre- and post-testing in connection with the KABC-TV series. According to Larry Marshburn, the tests "showed there was no question that the level of knowledge was tremendously higher in classes where the teachers made the program required viewing." Educational change was not as significant in classes where teachers merely encouraged students to watch.

Several cities that were not able to conduct formalized pre- and post-testing did facilitate impact evaluation in schools by distributing program outlines, lesson plans, discussion questions, and evaluation forms in advance to teachers in local school districts. In Seattle, Lynn Oliver says evaluation questionnaires from teachers in one local school district show that teachers "liked the fast pace of events, and the positive presentation that emphasized the right way to do things."

In at least one opinion, a basic success factor for evaluating TV programs on fire safety in the schools is having a well-established public education program and network already in place. "We were already in the schools," says Monte Brown in Denver. "We had already created the viewing audience."

# HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST

Can you answer "YES" to these questions?



## SMOKE DETECTORS

1. Does your home have a smoke detector?  
(If the answer is NO, purchase and install one immediately)
2. Is your smoke detector in good working order and located near the bedrooms?
3. Do you test it monthly?

## ELECTRICAL

4. Worn out electric cords can start fires. Are all electric cords in your house in safe condition?
5. Have you checked around your house and removed extension cords? If you MUST use them, do so temporarily.
6. Are you careful not to overload circuits?

## SMOKING - MATCHES

7. Do you refrain from smoking in bed?
8. Are plenty of large ashtrays kept where people smoke in your house?
9. Are matches and lighters kept out of reach of children?

## HOUSKEEPING

10. Do you keep your water heater and forced air closet, attic, basement, garage and yard free of "junk"?
11. If you have a fireplace, do you keep a screen in front of the fire? Sparks can start fires!

## KITCHEN SAFETY

12. Do you always use a lid when cooking? Remember! A lid will smother a grease fire.
13. Is your broiler free from grease? If a fire should occur in your broiler turn off the heat and close the broiler door quickly.
14. Do you always stay in the kitchen while cooking? Most kitchen fires start while unattended.

## SPECIAL HAZARDS

15. Has everyone been warned never to use gasoline or similar flammable liquids for cleaning clothes and other things?
16. Do you store gasoline in proper containers only?
17. Is your clothes dryer vented to the outside? Dust and lint can collect and cause a fire.
18. Is your hot water heater set at 120 degrees? Remember, hot water burns like fire. 150 degrees can cause third (3rd) degree burns (worst kind) in two (2) seconds. Lower the setting!! Also, save energy.
19. Is your wood stove properly installed under a permit?
20. Do you burn only dry wood and have your chimney cleaned periodically?

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENT.

Encourage the TV station to offer a home fire-safety checklist to viewers during the series. More than 5,000 checklists have been requested by viewers of the first 12 minidocumentaries.

## **Institutional Change**

Every city reports improved relationships, cooperation, and teamwork within the local fire service. Many program coordinators report that local fire departments liked the positive publicity the series provided, and are now more committed to working together and sharing resources. "It's positive reinforcement even for fire departments not directly involved in the production. They appreciate the support," says Ira Bryant in Anchorage.

In Southern California, Larry Marshburn says the production effort and subsequent positive feedback have helped to break down long-standing "turf" barriers between Los Angeles-area fire departments.

According to Lynn Oliver in Seattle, the program has improved the credibility of the King County office of code enforcement and inspection among local fire departments.

And, every city shows a big improvement in the relationship between the fire service and television news. As previous comments have demonstrated, fire educators and TV news people alike are enthusiastic about this impact of the project.

Norfolk's experience is a good summary case study on how a fire-safety miniseries can have broad institutional impact:

- Regarding the relationship between the fire service and the news media, Diane Roche in Virginia Beach says, "The media got a glimpse of the fire service they never had before. They gained new respect for us. It changed their way of thinking."
- Roche says this pioneer cooperative effort between Tidewater fire departments "opened the door for future projects."
- According to Roche, one local fire department has already shown a tape of "Epidemic...Fire" to a county council budget meeting.
- Within her own department, Roche says the series improved the relationship between fire educators and line firefighters. "It showed them in a good light," says Roche. "They liked the P.R. aspect."
- Finally Roche says she "discovered" the city public information office as a result of the series. Now she can rely on the information office for support in contacting newspapers, radio, and TV. "There's less technical intimidation," she says.

FIVE PART MINI-DOCUMENTARY SERIES--MAY 18-22, 1981

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME BARBARA CUSHING SCHOOL JUANITA EL  
GRADE LEVEL 6

1. How many students watched one or more segments? 15
2. How many students watched all five segments? 0
3. After classroom discussion, do you feel that most of the students learned something about fire prevention that they didn't know before? Yes, especially the "drop & roll" technique.
4. Do you think that it was a worthwhile project? Student discussion in class showed that kids were interested especially the Tues. evening show.
5. Do you have any suggestions regarding the presentation? (eg. time of day, <sup>home situation</sup> shown; content; clarity; effectiveness)

Kirkland is a base ball town & most 6<sup>th</sup> graders are at practice or a game at 5:00 this time of year. I would like to see if presented at another time of the year.

PLEASE SUBMIT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE SCHOOL OFFICE AND THEY WILL MAIL IT BACK TO THE FIRE DEPARTMENT. THANK YOU.

KIRKLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT  
210 MAIN STREET  
KIRKLAND, WA 98033

Teacher evaluations of the minidocumentaries have been overwhelmingly favorable. Shown above is a teacher questionnaire distributed to one school district in the Seattle area.

## Loss and Risk Reduction

Few of the cities involved to date in the "Fire Education and the News" program can point to solid evidence of actual loss or risk reduction. Of course, in Los Angeles there was that little boy who credited the series with saving his life. In most cases, however, it is too early to tell. In at least one city, ironically enough, recent statistical reports show a slight increase in fire deaths since the series. But some cities do see indications of loss reduction. In Los Angeles, for example, Larry Marshburn says the total dollar loss for the 1980 Christmas holiday season—which came on the heels of the KABC series—was "the lowest ever."

In the St. Louis metropolitan area, there was an ironic twist on loss reduction thanks to a series: several neighboring fire districts that did not choose to get involved in promoting this series to their local community and schools have suffered the most deaths since the program aired.

## What About Cost?

One of the most remarkable things about the "Fire Education and the News" program is its cost-effectiveness. "For the time devoted to it," says Diane Roche, "we got a good return on our investment. Time is really the only resource required. Little direct expense is involved."

No fire department spent more than \$100 of its public education budget. One department reported a flat zero direct cost. Direct expenses generally involved printing, mailing, or administrative costs.

Program coordinators like Diane Roche generally spent less than one person-month (15 to 20 person-days) planning, organizing, producing, and following up the minidocumentary programs. Fire officials from neighboring jurisdictions who were directly involved in the production efforts averaged less than five person-days of effort for each individual.

A major factor contributing to the cost effectiveness of this program is the fact that all media consulting fees are paid by FEMA through the Illinois Fire Inspector's grant. The expert technical assistance costs local fire departments nothing.

Program cost data is summarized in the chart on the following page.

# Fire Education and the News

## COST SUMMARY

	DIRECT LABOR COST		DIRECT EXPENSES		
City	PROGRAM COORDINATOR	OTHER PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS	PRINTING	VEHICLE OPERATION	OTHER (EQUIPMENT, MAILING)
Anchorage	10 days	4-5 days total	< \$100	\$2	\$ 20
Denver	20 days	4 days total	0	0	0
Detroit	10 days	20 days total	< \$100	0	0
Los Angeles	13 days	2-3 days per person	< \$80	0	0
Norfolk	15-20 days	3-5 days per person	< \$100	0	0
Portland	15-20 days	2-3 days per persons	< \$100	0	0
Sacramento	15-20 days	2-3 days per person	< \$100	0	0
St. Louis	22 days	2-3 days per person	< \$50	0	0
Seattle	20 days	2 days per person	0	0	< \$100



## **In Conclusion**

Carolyn Millington, a fire prevention officer for the Redondo Beach (CA) fire department who assisted in the Los Angeles production effort, aptly summarizes the wide-ranging success of FEMA's "Fire Education and the News" program. Said Millington in a recent interview: "The cooperation was great, and the feedback was tremendous. It opened up a new public education resource. It was a terrific experience for our department. I'm just glad I was a part of it."

\* \* \* \* \*

(More information about the FEMA "Fire Education and the News" program can be obtained by contacting Mr. G. Clay Hollister; Chief, Public Education Program; U.S. Fire Administration; Federal Emergency Management Agency; Washington, D.C. 20472; telephone: (202) 287-0763. Program participation is arranged by writing to Mr. Lonnie Jackson of the Illinois Fire Inspector's Association; P.O. Box 521; Mt. Prospect, Illinois 60056; telephone: (312) 392-6699.)





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