



EL PASO FIRE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES ITS PUBLIC SAFETY INITIATIVES FOR 2012

EL PASO, TEXAS – The El Paso Fire Department today announced its public safety initiatives for 2012 in an effort to reduce fire-related fatalities, injuries and property damages.

The announcement to promote enhanced community awareness of fire prevention and public safety education programs comes as the department enters its 130 years of service to the citizens of El Paso.

The El Paso Fire Department is committed to this effort because public safety is its top priority and it understands that most fire losses, deaths and injuries can be prevented through effective public awareness programs.

In 2011, fire and emergency units responded to more than 71,000 calls, including some that resulted in fatalities. In 2011, El Paso reported eight fire-related deaths, a decrease from 11 reported in 2010. El Paso also reported an estimated \$4.5 million in residential property loss due to fire last year.

“Although we did see a slight decrease in 2011, we are committed to continue to expand and enhance our public safety efforts in 2012 and introduce new public safety initiatives,” Fire Chief Otto Drozd said.

The El Paso Fire Department first introduced a public safety initiative plan in 2010. In 2011, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) under their Urban Fire Safety Task Force program worked with the El Paso Fire Department to create a strategy to teach residents about fire prevention and safety hazards. Through this partnership, focus groups were evaluated and a strategy was developed on how the El Paso Fire Department could reach high-risk groups as well as the general public with fire safety messages. This study helped the El Paso Fire Department understand attitudes and awareness, fire safety importance, current preparations and other aspects in relation to fire. The NFPA is a non-profit organization committed to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training and education.

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This year, Fire Chief Drozd and the El Paso Fire Department are reaffirming their commitment to that public safety strategy by continuing the initiatives from 2011 and introducing new public safety programs.

Public education and awareness initiatives for 2012:

Neighborhood Association Partnership Program: The El Paso Fire Department will continue to build a collaborative partnership between the department and local neighborhood associations. The goal remains to fully integrate the El Paso Fire Department into the community through outreach efforts, and establish a line of communication between the neighborhood associations and those who respond to their neighborhood emergencies.

Home Safety Survey Program: This program was introduced in 2011 and the department will continue to conduct Home Safety Surveys throughout the City. This program allows firefighters to meet citizens in their neighborhood and walk through residences giving free home safety surveys. These visits give firefighters the opportunity to check smoke detectors and install new batteries or detectors if needed. The walk through also allows firefighters to identify any fire hazards in the home. Home Safety Surveys are also available online at www.elpasotexas.gov/fire and can be completed and submitted by fax or e-mail.

Smoke Detector Program: Smoke detectors cut the chance of fire related deaths by 50%. This important fact is the reason why the El Paso Fire Department has made a huge effort in recent years to provide its Citizens with an easy way of obtaining smoke detectors. The El Paso Fire Department's Community Risk Reduction Division is available to install smoke detectors at no cost. Batteries will also be replaced in the smoke detectors of elderly or physically challenged persons who cannot change the batteries themselves.

Return to the Scene Program: This new initiative will give the El Paso Fire Department's Community Risk Reduction Division the opportunity to reach those neighborhoods affected by recent fires. The purpose of the program is to have members from this division return to the street where a fire recently occurred and provide education and awareness to that neighborhood. This outreach will give the department an opportunity to specifically target local neighborhoods and answer any questions relating to the fire that occurred and discuss fire escape plans, install smoke detectors and provide fire safety information while the fire is still fresh in their minds.

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If you have any questions or would like additional information regarding any of these programs, please contact the Fire Prevention Division at (915) 485-5699.

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