



## Community Fire Safety Advocates

*A model for educating multicultural communities*

**June 12, 2010**

Five members of an Ethiopian family die in a house fire. Four are children.





## **Immediate Prevention Strategy**

- 1. Craft simple, consistent prevention message for all outreach venues.**
- 2. Include messages in all Seattle Fire Department media outlets (blog, FB, Twitter).**
- 3. Give messages to all media outlets (TV, print news, radio, online).**
- 4. Provide website with resources for parents.**
- 5. Produce special media segments (New Day NW).**
- 6. Feature at community meetings.**



## Targeted Prevention Strategy

- Develop a program to address fire safety needs of Seattle’s East African community.



## Seattle’s East African Community

- Four separate language groups (Amharic, Oromo, Somali, Tigrinya)
- Two main religious affiliations (Muslim & Christian)
- Three main countries of origin (Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea)
- Mostly immigrated within the last 20 years.
- Estimated population—6,000.

## Challenge

Deliver culturally relevant fire safety education that is targeted to the risks of the identified community.

## Needed

- Culturally competent educators & delivery methods
- Understanding of target groups' fire risks
- Access to the target communities
- Motivation by target communities to learn safe behaviors.

**CULTURAL COMPETENCE** refers to an ability to successfully negotiate cross-cultural differences in order to accomplish practical goals.

## Community Fire Safety Advocates



### Modeled after *Community Lay Workers*

- Global model for providing public health service to underserved communities.
- Utilize community members to serve as connectors between health care agencies and cultural community.

## Characteristics of Advocates:

- come from the community in which they work,
- have standing and trust from members of that community,
- speak the same language,
- identify and have a sense of service with the community



## Program Goals:

1. Increase home fire safety and fire prevention practices among members of the East African community.
2. Expand and improve outreach to East African communities by Seattle Fire Department members.
3. Build relationships between the Seattle Fire Department and East African community leaders.
4. Increase the Fire Department's understanding of the needs and concerns of the East African community.
5. Demonstrate to the East African community the services offered by the Seattle Fire Department.





Advocates chosen in consort with established, respected community groups and leaders to identify individuals.



### **Training:**

- 15 hours of classroom and on-site training.
- Passing a skills-based test demonstrating fire safety practices.
- Familiarity with Seattle Fire Dept. services by visiting sites.
- A sense of belonging by meeting Fire Department members.
- Partnering with fire educator until confident.



## Graduation Ceremony

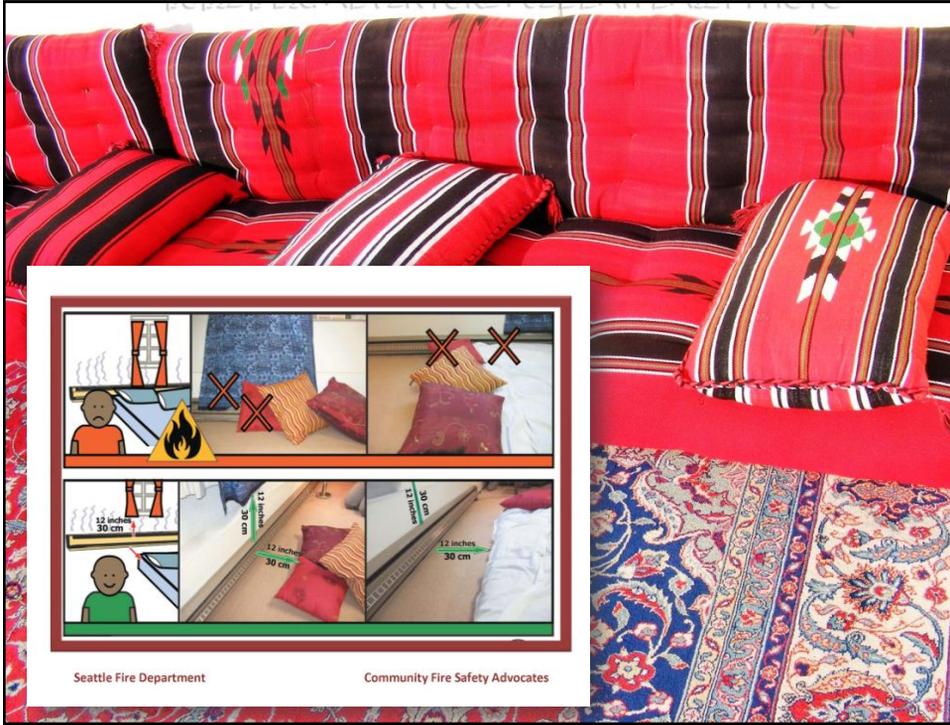


Seattle Fire Department Community Fire Safety Advocates

### Coffee Roasting

- When roasting coffee, try not to set off smoke alarm.
- Open a window, turn on the stove fan.
- Wave a towel to clear smoke alarm and stop beeping.
- Never take down smoke alarm or remove battery.

Seattle Fire Department Community Fire Safety Advocates





**Summer Festivals**



**Community Presentations**



**Health Fairs**



**Small Groups @ Apartments**



**Elders Groups**



**Smoke & CO Alarm Outreach**



**Fire Station Open Houses**

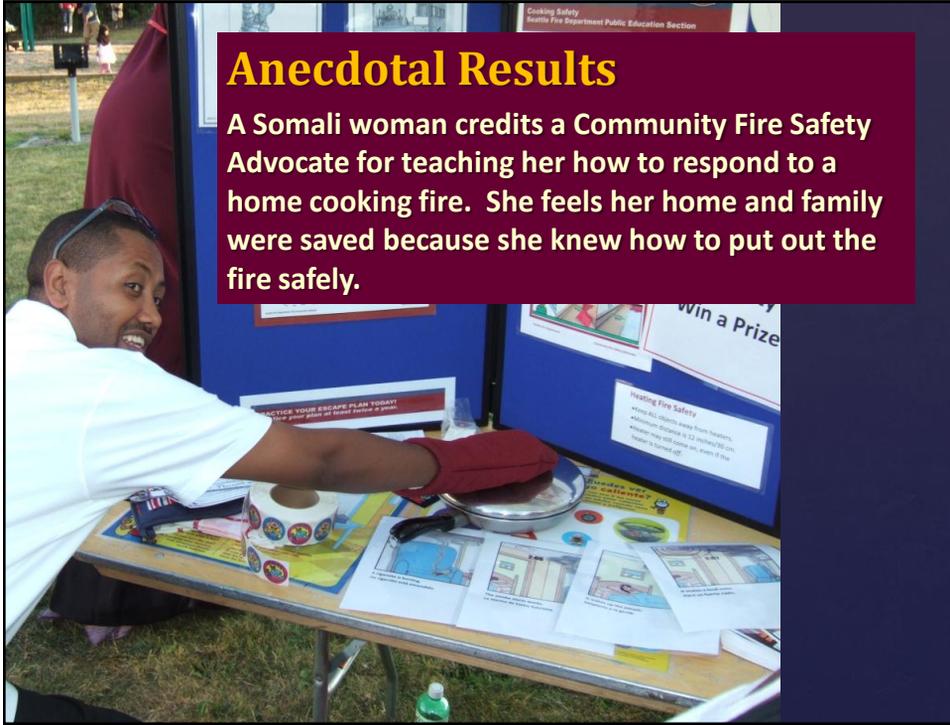
## Community Service Awards

Community Fire Safety Advocates were awarded the Seattle Fire Department's *Community Service Award* at the Department's Annual Awards Night Event.



## Results

- Ten East African community members have received capacity-building skills and knowledge in fire safety and prevention.
- Community Fire Safety Advocates conducted 408 hours of outreach activity between September 2010 and December 2011.
- Over 4,000 East African community members have been reached with culturally relevant fire safety information.
- Positive relationships are established between Seattle Fire Department members and East African community leaders and agencies.



**Anecdotal Results**  
A Somali woman credits a Community Fire Safety Advocate for teaching her how to respond to a home cooking fire. She feels her home and family were saved because she knew how to put out the fire safely.

## Major Challenges

- Fitting unconventional program into a conventional fire service.
- Diversity of customs, languages, traditions among and within immigrant groups.
- Evaluating program effectiveness beyond the number of people reached.



## Successful Multicultural Fire Education:

1. Aims to address the target groups' fire risks.
2. Teaches behaviors that are do-able and targeted to the risks.
3. Is developed in collaboration with native language speakers.
4. Is culturally relevant in its methods, delivery and materials.
5. Appeals to the target communities' motivation to learn safe behaviors.
6. Is delivered in the primary language of the learner.



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