



Outreach for Inclusion: How to Engage Diverse Communities

Having a strong relationship with your community not only helps to improve public safety and recruit new members, it also makes people feel welcome at your department. In diverse communities this is especially important. For a fire department to effectively serve and represent a diverse community, they need to understand the people that make up their community.

Here are some ways your department can start to engage different groups within a diverse community and make connections that lead to inclusion.

Conduct an Assessment: Take the time to learn about the community you serve. Look at the Census data to understand the demographics of your service area. Make a list of key community leaders, groups, public services and businesses.

Adapt Your Materials: Develop marketing and educational materials in different languages to effectively reach out to different ethnic groups within your community. Partner with a local community group to assist with the translation of materials.

Meet with Leaders: Setup meetings with community leaders to educate them about the fire department and the services you provide. Talk about ways you can collaborate.

Participate in Community Events: Staff a table at a community fair, participate in parades or hold a blood pressure clinic. Make your department visible in the community. The more your community members see you, the more familiar they will become with your department.

Department Open House: Invite members of your community into the fire station. Let them tour the station and interact with the firefighters. Show them what you do and let them ask questions.

Presentations: Reach out to key community groups and ask if you can present at a meeting. Learn about what different groups in your community are doing and how you can partner with them.

Work with Local Media: Partner with the local newspaper to get a featured article or reoccurring column. Advertise events and volunteer opportunities on your local public access channel. Reach out to local radio stations about your outreach events.

Door-to-Door Outreach: Get out into the community and meet the people you serve. Educate them about fire prevention and safety. Learn if you have residents, such as the elderly or those with special needs, who may require extra help in the event of an evacuation or emergency.

Survey: Send out a community survey. Ask for feedback about the department. See how different members of the community view your department. Identify areas for improvement and ways you can connect with your community.

Youth Outreach: Visit schools and educate them about fire prevention. Host fire camps in the summer. Attend youth sporting events. Engage the volunteers of the future and foster their interest in the fire service.

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