



**FEMA**

N0670

Dear National Fire Academy Student:

Congratulations on being selected to attend the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), National Fire Academy (NFA) “Community Risk Reduction: A Policy Approach” (CRR: PA) course.

The purpose of the course is to empower students with the ability to create, evaluate and defend public policy in their home community. The course is also designed to facilitate understanding of how codes and regulations can be used as an effective component in fire prevention, fire mitigation and overall community risk reduction.

There is a graded pre-course enclosed to prepare you for the course. This assignment is worth 20% of your final grade. It is to be submitted the first morning of class in a binder for grading. The assignment will be used throughout the course.

This is a six-day class, with evening classes possible. Check with your host site for the schedule.

The Student Manual (SM) for this course is now available in a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) format that will function on any electronic device. Please see the page following this letter for complete instructions on successfully downloading your SM. Please note: If you plan to bring/use an iPad, you may experience issues saving/storing/printing course assignments because there is no USB/thumb drive capacity for these devices.

If you need additional information related to your course’s content or requirements, please contact Mr. Michael Weller, Fire Prevention Management Curriculum training specialist, at 301-447-1476, or by email at [michael.weller@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:michael.weller@fema.dhs.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eriks J. Gabliks".

Eriks J. Gabliks, Superintendent  
National Fire Academy  
U.S. Fire Administration

Enclosures

December 2023

## **National Fire Academy Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Course Materials/Download Instructions**

If you own an electronic device (laptop computer, tablet, etc.) and are familiar with its document reader functions, we are asking you to download the Student Manual (SM) before you travel to class and bring the preloaded device with you.

The **first step** is to download Adobe Acrobat Reader to your device. This will enable you to read and manipulate the course materials. Adobe Acrobat Reader can be used to comment and highlight text in PDF documents. It is an excellent tool for note-taking purposes.

### **For laptops and computers**

Adobe Acrobat Reader can be downloaded from [www.adobe.com/downloads/](http://www.adobe.com/downloads/). It is a free download. Please note that depending on your settings, you may have to temporarily disable your antivirus software.

### **For tablets and other similar hand-held devices**

Adobe Acrobat Reader can be downloaded onto devices such as iPads, Android tablets and other hand-held devices. The application can be found in the device's application store using the search function and typing in "Adobe Acrobat Reader." Follow the instructions given. **It is a free application.**

After you have successfully downloaded the Adobe Acrobat Reader, please use the following web link to download your SM. You may copy/paste this link into your web browser.

[https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/ax/sm/sm\\_0670.pdf](https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/ax/sm/sm_0670.pdf)

Note: In order to have the editing capabilities/toolbar, the SM needs to be opened with Adobe Acrobat Reader. There should be a function on your device to do this.

If you need assistance, please contact [nfaonlinetier2@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:nfaonlinetier2@fema.dhs.gov).

December 2023

# **COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION: A POLICY APPROACH**

## **PRE-COURSE ASSIGNMENT**

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION: A POLICY APPROACH COURSE

Welcome to Community Risk Reduction: A Policy Approach (CRR: PA). CRR: PA empowers students with the ability to create, evaluate and defend public policy in their home community.

The course is designed to facilitate understanding of how codes and regulations can be used as an effective component in fire prevention, fire mitigation and overall community risk reduction. The course will address how to:

- Use a community risk assessment to prioritize risk.
- Develop a problem statement and recommend a strategic prevention intervention using public policy.
- Design a strategy to build support for a public policy.
- Develop and submit a proposal for a public policy.
- Understand the public policy issue resolution process.
- Educate, apply and evaluate a new or modified public policy.

Public policy is a potentially effective but often underutilized component of risk reduction. Recall that the most effective risk-reduction strategies employ use of combined prevention interventions to include:

- Public Education.
- Engineering and Technology.
- Enactment and Enforcement.
- Economic Incentives to Support Prevention.
- Emergency Response.

Public policy has been recognized for many decades as a key component of an integrated risk reduction strategy. The 1947 President's Conference on Fire Prevention called for use of public policy as a component for reducing the impact of fire. That recommendation was echoed again during the first Wingspread Conference in 1966 and three additional times during subsequent Wingspread Conferences.

Perhaps the strongest recommendation to use public policy as a means of preventing or mitigating the effects of fire came in the benchmark report "America Burning," published in 1973. These recommendations were also stressed in subsequent reports that have occurred nearly every decade since. The most recent call for use of public policy as an integrated component of prevention/mitigation of risk appears in the Vision 20/20 report.

If you are not familiar with the 1947 President's Conference on Fire Prevention, the America Burning Series or the Vision 20/20 initiatives, please review these topics prior to attending National Fire Academy (NFA). The documents/initiative will be discussed in class, and you should be familiar with them. Information on the 1947 President's Conference and the America Burning series can be found on the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) website at [www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov). Information on Vision 20/20 can be found at [www.strategicfire.org](http://www.strategicfire.org).

Public policy can play a critical role in risk prevention and mitigation because it may require the application of all types of prevention interventions. Because all members of our industry have a duty to help apply public policy at the local level, the target population for CRR: PA is broad. It includes fire marshals, building officials, public educators, inspectors, plan reviewers, investigators, officers and other public officials.

Most NFA courses require completion of a pre-course assignment. The assignment for CRR: PA is a multistep process that includes:

- Create a profile of the local community.
- Identify and profile risks in your community.
- Know your form of government.
- Identify the fire/building codes used in your jurisdiction.
- Research the process for proposing, adopting or modifying public policy in the community you serve.
- Attend or watch a meeting of the city council, county commission or township supervisors to explore local democracy in action.

**Completion of the pre-course assignment is mandatory for acceptance into CRR: PA.** Information from the assignment will be used to process in-class activities and ultimately develop a draft plan for using public policy as part of an integrated prevention/mitigation strategy in the community you protect. **You should bring the information collected as part of the pre-course assignment with you to the NFA.** You are encouraged to bring a laptop computer (or other word processing device) as well as a thumb drive memory storage stick.

Any questions about the pre-course assignment should be directed to Michael Weller, Training Specialist, 301-447-1476 or at [michael.weller@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:michael.weller@fema.dhs.gov).

## **PART 1: BUILDING A DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF YOUR COMMUNITY**

### **Background Information**

A community profile describes the demographics of your community. The profile includes people-related data that includes:

- Demographic dispersion of the population.
- Demographic dispersion of confirmed (or potential) vulnerable groups.
- Economic profile of the community.
- Demographic dispersion of ethnic groups.
- Diversity of languages throughout community.
- The United States Census Bureau collects demographic data on every community in the country. All risk-reduction practitioners should be familiar with the information processed by the bureau.



## Assignment for Part 1

### Use the website USA.com

A good web-based tool to help you build a brief but informative demographic profile of your community can be found at [www.usa.com](http://www.usa.com). This site provides up-to-date demographic information from the U.S. Census Bureau. Data for the Decennial Census is collected by the Bureau every 10 years and is used to determine congressional districts. The Decennial Census seeks to determine the number of people who live in a community.

Let us look at an example of how to get demographical information for a city (or community) as a whole.

You simply go to the website, search for your city and click on the basic information tab. Next, explore what is available under categories, such as population/race, income/careers, etc. An example screenshot featuring Hagerstown, Maryland, is displayed below.

Note: When initiating the search, please use your city's name followed by the abbreviation for your state, such as "MD," "PA," etc.

The screenshot shows the USA.com website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Local Data Search" and a search button. Below the search bar, there is a navigation menu with tabs for "Basic Info", "Population/Races", "Income/Careers", "Housing", "Education", "Crime/Crime Rate", and "Others". The "Basic Info" tab is currently selected. The main content area displays demographic information for Hagerstown, MD, including population, growth, density, income, and house price. A callout box with a white background and a black border points to the navigation tabs with the text "Explore using these tabs." The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the time as 2:59 PM on 5/6/2015.

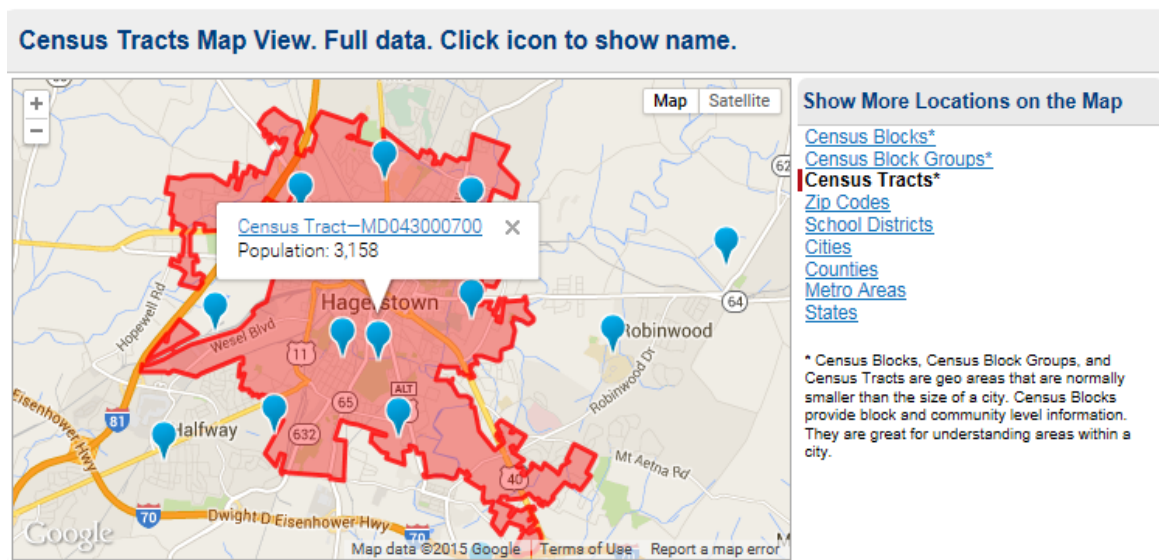
Stop and explore your city or community demographics, as a whole, to gain practice using the tool.

Let us continue with the next step. A second type of census, the American Community Survey (ACS), is as an on-going task of the Bureau. The ACS is mailed to over three million U.S. residents annually. The Bureau's goal is to survey each U.S. resident every seven years to create demographic profiles of local communities. ACS data is important to risk-reduction specialists because it provides information about where and how people live.

Data from the ACS allows us to explore demographic data both communitywide and by census tracts. Census tracts are defined geographical areas within a city, town, county or village.

Census tracts generally have a population size between 1,200 and 8,000 people, with an optimal size of 4,000 people. Each tract carries a numerical identification. The number of census tracts in a community is based upon its size and population. The size of the tract is related to the number of people living there. You may be from a geographical area that has anywhere from a few census tracts (rural area) to hundreds of census tracts (urban city).

To drill down on smaller parts of specific geographical areas, census tracts can be divided further into census block groups and then into individual blocks. A census block group is a geographical unit that's between the size of a census tract and a census block. A block group is the smallest geographical unit for which the bureau publishes sample data (i.e., data which is only collected from a fraction of all households). Typically, block groups have a population of 600 to 3,000 people. A census block is the smallest geographic unit used by the bureau for tabulation of 100 percent data (data collected from all houses rather than a sample of houses). In an urban city, census blocks are often as small as one or two city blocks. Let us look at an example:



Recall the first screenshot example from Hagerstown, Maryland. What you see above is a screenshot displaying the bottom of the basic information page. We have clicked on the census tract field shown on the right side of the screen. The example is displaying the number of census tracts in Hagerstown. The red shaded area represents the corporate boundary of the city. Each blue balloon represents a census tract.

The only way to become proficient at using this tool is to practice with it. While it may appear a little intimidating as you begin practicing, this tool is very user friendly. You should now take some time to explore your city or community in a magnified scale.

Begin by searching for your city. (Remember to use the state abbreviation, such as “MD” or “PA.”) A map will be displayed showing the outline of your city. Go to the right side of the screen, locate the “Cities” tab and click on it. On the map, there should be a blue balloon identifying your city and the incorporated towns around it. There will also be a red dash beside the city category on the right side of the screen.

Next, locate the census tract feature and click on it. You should see a display similar to what is displayed on the Hagerstown screenshot above. Note: If you are searching an urban city, do not panic when you see a huge amount of blue balloons. Hagerstown has a population of 39,000. The larger the city, the more census tracts there are. Simply drill down on the area you wish to explore by clicking on it or using the zoom feature.

Find the census tract or tracts that represent the area you wish to explore. Click on the blue balloon for the census tract, and then click on the underlined link. You will notice the census tract area is highlighted, and there is an option to click on the purple balloons for census block groups. **Do not click on the block groups yet.** Stop and explore the demographics of the census tract first. Clicking on the map will give you a larger view of the area, including street names.

Next, click on one of the purple block group balloons. The area will enlarge on the screen and then give you balloons for block groups. Use the same process as listed above to explore the block group you want to look at. **Caution: Do not click on the green balloons yet, as they will take you to individual blocks.**

Once you have explored the block group, click on one of the green balloons, and start exploring at the individual block level.

Note to our friends representing a Fire Protection District: In addition to census tracts, you may wish to explore data by ZIP code because of the size and geographical layout of your district..

1. Use American FactFinder to build a **current** demographical profile of your home community. Develop a profile of the people who live in your community (age, gender, race, ethnicity, incomes, poverty, etc.). Perform the same actions for housing (type of homes, age, owner versus renter, etc.). A profile of employment should also be explored. **A worksheet (with prompting questions) is provided to assist you.**
2. You may live in a city or town that has multiple census tracts. You are encouraged to seek out someone in your community who has expertise working with the U.S. census. This person can help you obtain information about specific census tracts. This is your opportunity to understand how the census can assist you in compiling demographic information about your community. You are again encouraged to explore no more than four census tracts in your community. It might be advantageous to select areas where more fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) calls are run to obtain data about those specific areas.
  - The demographical information will be used throughout the CRR: PA course.

- You **must** have this information available throughout the CRR: PA course in order to process the in-class activities. Saving the information on your computer or printing hard copies is highly recommended.
  - Being able to **explain and use** the demographical, social and cultural development of your community is essential to the effectiveness and credibility of a public policy development team.
3. Additional sources that may be helpful in locating demographic information includes but is not limited to:
- [www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com).
  - City and County Planning Departments.
  - Office of Community Development.
  - Housing Authority.
  - Economic Development Commission.
  - Chamber of Commerce.
  - Community Action Council.
  - Local schools, hospitals and health departments.
  - Head start programs and child care organizations.
  - Department of Social Services.
  - Commission on Aging.
  - Advocacy Groups.
  - Neighborhood Associations.
  - Houses of Worship.

**DEMOGRAPHIC WORKSHEET**

Build a demographical, social, economic and housing profile of your community. **Bulleted summary statements are acceptable.**

Category	Description	Questions to answer — your community
Demographical (people-related information):	Population size, distribution, age, ethnicity and cultures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the total population of your community?</li> <li>• Try to determine the population of at least four census tracts.</li> <li>• Try to determine which of these census tracts have greatest concentration of the following vulnerable populations:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children under 5?</li> <li>- Older adults?</li> <li>- People challenged by poverty?</li> <li>- People with disabilities?</li> <li>- People who speak little or no English?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Social characteristics:	Education levels and family profiles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the demographics of education levels throughout your community?</li> <li>• Try to determine what census tracts include the greatest populations of the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Single-parent homes?</li> <li>- Two-parent homes?</li> <li>- People living alone?</li> <li>- Older adults living alone?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Economic characteristics:	Employment profile and rates, income levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the employment profile of your constituency?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Types of jobs?</li> <li>- Work in community or commute?</li> <li>- Major <b>local</b> employers?</li> <li>- Unemployment rate?</li> <li>- Income level ranges?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**DEMOGRAPHIC WORKSHEET**

Category	Description	Your community
Housing profile:	Age of homes and occupants, types of residential occupancies, home ownership versus rental properties, transience among residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the overall housing profile of your community?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Average age of homes?</li> <li>- New (or recent) construction?</li> <li>- Homes with automatic detection <b>and</b> suppression equipment?</li> <li>- Types of residential construction?</li> <li>- Types of residential properties (single-family, duplex, multiunit)?</li> <li>- Renter versus owner occupied?</li> <li>- Transience? (How often do people relocate to another residence?)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Develop a <b>general overview</b> of your community's housing profile.</p>
Growth trends:	Project growth trends for your community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use bullet points to profile how your community has changed over the past 10 years and what its profile may look like 10 years from now.</li> </ul>

## **PART 2: BUILDING A RISK PROFILE OF YOUR COMMUNITY**

### **Background Information**

Community risk can be human-created or naturally occurring. Human-created risks are those that have some form of human involvement at their core. Examples include cooking fires, car crashes and ground level falls. Naturally occurring risks are those that develop without a human component. Examples include earthquakes and severe weather events.

Traditionally, the following factors are considered when prioritizing a community risk to address:

- Frequency of occurrence (how often the risk happens).
- Injuries and deaths caused by the risk.
- Property loss caused by the risk.
- Are the number of incidents rising or falling?
- Where are incidents occurring and who is at greatest risk?

### **Assignment for Part 2**

Use the risk profile sheet located on the next page to identify priority risks and consider if use of public policy may be an appropriate component of a risk-reduction strategy.

**RISK WORKSHEET**

<b>Type of Risk</b>	<b>Why is it being identified as a priority risk?</b>	<b>Where does the risk occur most frequently and what populations are most affected?</b>	<b>Is there currently a public policy in place that addresses the risk?</b>	<b>Could public policy be utilized to help prevent/mitigate the risk?  Why or why not?</b>



## **PART 3: PUBLIC POLICY IN YOUR COMMUNITY**

### **Background Information**

As members of the public safety industry, each of us has some level of experience with the development or application of local public policy.

If you have ever served on a committee to develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) for your organization, you have helped create a form of policy. Perhaps you helped create policy that was applied in the community, such as a smoke alarm or sprinkler ordinance.

At a minimum, every public servant applies a form of public policy when delivering emergency response, as local government is responsible for protecting its citizens. If you provide plans review or inspection services, you apply policy each time a code or standard is interpreted and enforced.

As a student in CRR: PA, you will learn how to conduct environmental scanning. This process entails analyzing the community to assess stakeholder/public interest and opinion of a proposed public policy. To prepare for the CRR: PA course, please perform the assignment for Part 3.

### **Assignment for Part 3**

1. Know your form of government. (Examples include weak/strong mayor; city manager/administrator; board of supervisors or commission, etc.)
2. Identify the fire/building codes utilized in the community you serve.
3. Know the process for proposing, adopting and modifying public policy in the community you serve.
4. Bring an example of a local ordinance.
5. If your jurisdiction uses a standard ordinance template, bring a copy to class.
6. Attend in person or watch via cable a meeting of your local legislative body.

## **PART 4: FIRE IS EVERYONE'S FIGHT**

Explore the USFA's Fire is Everyone's Fight™. This national effort is led by the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) to lower the number of home fires and home fire injuries in America. Along with USFA and partner organizations across the country, the fire community is speaking out with a unified message of fire prevention and safety to the public. The goal is to change how people think about fire and fire prevention, using social marketing strategies to address the broadest audience.

### **Assignment for Part 4**

Go to <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/fief/index.html>.

Explore the free resources offered through the USFA's Fire is Everyone's Fight.