

**DEVELOPING A RISK REDUCTION PROGRAM FOR ROSEVILLE'S  
OLDER ADULTS**

LEADING COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION

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An applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy as part of the  
Executive Fire Officer Program

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*Appendix B Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.dhs.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.*

**CERTIFICATION STATEMENT**

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writing of another.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## ABSTRACT

The problem was that the City of Roseville did not have a community risk reduction program in place to address the risks associated with its aging population.

The purpose of this research project was to identify model risk reduction programs that are available and to develop a community risk reduction program for older adults in the City of Roseville.

Action research methodology was used during this research project. The goal was to evaluate the way things were and to develop an action plan for a care program.

The following questions were researched:

1. What are the current and projected demographic changes for older adults in the City of Roseville?
2. What are the risks associated with an older population?
3. What programs are currently in place to assist with an older population?
4. What programs are other communities using to address risks associated with older populations?
5. What intervention strategies can be developed to address these risks in Roseville?

Research procedures included obtaining and analyzing data relevant to the demographics of the City of Roseville and risks associated with an older population. Procedures included researching what programs are currently offered within the city as well as other communities.

Results showed that a disproportional amount of the citizens in the City of Roseville are over the age of 55. This age group is highly susceptible to unintentional

injury, many of which can be prevented. Programs that are currently in place were identified and opportunities for improvement were revealed.

Research for this paper supports the recommendation to institute a risk reduction program for older adults in the City of Roseville. The program should be modeled after nationally and locally developed programs. An ongoing evaluation of the efficacy of the program should be conducted and changes should be made as necessary.

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## INTRODUCTION

The problem is that a large portion of the City of Roseville's population is over the age of 55. Currently the community does not have a community risk reduction program to address the inherent risks associated with its aging population.

The purpose of this research project is to identify model risk reduction programs that are available and to develop a community risk reduction program for older adults in the City of Roseville.

Action research methodology will be used during this research project. The goal is to evaluate the way things are currently and to develop an action plan for a care program in Roseville.

The following questions will be researched:

1. What are the current and projected demographic changes for older adults in the City of Roseville?
2. What are the risks associated with an older population?
3. What programs are currently in place to assist with an older population?
4. What programs are other communities using to address risks associated with older populations?
5. What intervention strategies can be developed to address these risks in Roseville?

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The Roseville Fire Department is a Class 3 Insurance Service Organization (ISO) rated department, located in the City of Roseville, Minnesota, which is a first-ring suburb to Minneapolis and St. Paul. The area served by the department is approximately 13.5 square miles, with a residential population of 35,000. With three malls and over 5,500 businesses, Roseville is considered the premier retail and commercial district in the northern metropolitan area of the Twin Cities. The transient daytime population is estimated to be 150,000. The department provides fire suppression and rescue services using part-time personnel operating from three stations and responding to approximately 700 calls each year.

The department was formed in 1944 as a volunteer department, with eight members. At the time, the department served a small rural population. The response area consisted mainly of farm land with some light industries on the western border. Over the years, demographics of the city have changed significantly. A large industrial area is situated on the western third of the city, with the balance of the area heavily populated with commercial, retail, and residential structures.

With this growth has come ever increasing demands on the fire department. This has included a rise in call volume and an increase in the types of incidents the department responds to. The department continues to operate with part-time firefighters. In 1999 the department hired its first full-time employee, a fire chief. This was due to the overwhelming time commitment and responsibility that previous part-time chiefs of the department had experienced. In 2001, a full-time assistant chief was added to the



organization. The department also has a full-time fire inspector and fire marshal. The rest of the officers and members of the department are part-time employees.

The department is well known for providing quality services to its residents as well as being a progressive and professional department.

In 2003 the State of Minnesota reduced its Local Government Aid and Homestead taxes to cities across the State of Minnesota. The end result for the City of Roseville was a \$700,000 reduction in its operating budget. Currently the fire department is allocated less than 3% of the overall city budget and is being asked to reduce its budget by 2% for fiscal year 2005.

The department was asked for and produced a strategic plan for the city council. This plan however has yet to be adopted by the city council. The plan includes efforts to operate the department more effectively and efficiently. It also includes plans to expand and improve the services provided by the fire department. Despite numerous occasions of presenting and explaining the plan to council, they have not embraced the direction that has been suggested, nor has the department been given any other direction to follow. This has led to frustration amongst the administration and membership.

It was identified and suggested by city and fire administration that the department become more involved in the community. Although we frequently host and attend community events, there is no common goal or identifiable message being delivered by the department members to the public. Customer service therefore has been passive rather than proactive.

The fire marshal and fire inspector conduct life safety education to older adults on a request basis. Most of the fire prevention and safety training conducted is presented

during fire prevention week. This training is conducted at elementary schools and is mainly focused on children. Currently, there is not a structured program that addresses the risk or needs associated with our elderly population.

Roseville has one of the lowest numbers of residents under the age of 18 (21% of the total population) and is declining. It is predicted that from 2000 to 2020, the population that is 55-64 years old will remain stable at 14%; the 65-74 age group will increase from 14% to 16%; and the 75+ age group will increase from 17% to 27% of the total population. By the year 2020, the majority (57%) of Roseville's head of households will be more than 55 years of age. Among cities with more than 10,000 population, Roseville has the second highest percentage of residents over the age of 65 (21%) and ranks highest among the largest metro cities with over 3% of its current population over the age of 85 (City of Roseville, 2003).

In the United States today, the older population is the fastest growing age group. In 2001 there were 35 million older adults which accounted for 12.4 percent of the population. It is projected that this age group will grow to 80 million by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

According to the United States Fire Administration (USFA) eighty percent of all fire deaths occur in the home. People over the age of 65 face the greatest risk of dying in a fire, with an average of 959 deaths and 2,425 injured per year. People over the age of 80 die in fires at a rate that is three times higher than the rest of the population (USFA, 2004). The older population due to decreased mobility, health, and sight are also prone to unintentional injury and death. According the National Center for Injury Prevention and

Control (NCIPC) people over the age of 55 from 1999 to 2001, suffered 66,717 deaths (56.3%) due to falls and motor vehicle accidents (NCIPC, 2001).

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) predicts that these statistics along with the large number of baby boomers reaching senior citizen status, and the fact that the current senior citizens are living longer are strong indicators that the number of preventable injuries will also increase (FEMA, 1998).

The Roseville Fire Department has the opportunity to make a significant difference for the community it serves. By developing a risk reduction program for older adults, the department will be able to participate in a proactive manner to assist in the reduction of unintentional injuries to the citizens in the City of Roseville. By becoming more active in the community the fire department is likely to gain more support from the citizens. This end result would be the creation of a win-win relationship.

This Applied Research Project (ARP) is related to the “Assessing Community Risk” unit in the National Fire Academy’s *Leading Community Risk Reduction* course (NFA, 2003, SM 2-1). One of the United States Fire Administration’s operational objectives is to promote within the communities a comprehensive, multihazard risk reduction plan (NFA, 2003, p. II-2). A risk reduction program for older adults will help to achieve this goal.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review is based on the information found to answer the five questions that were posed for this research project.

### **What are the current and projected demographic changes for older adults in the City of Roseville?**

Roseville has one of the lowest numbers of residents under the age of 18 (21% of the total population) and is declining. It is predicted that from 2000 to 2020, the population that is 55-64 years old will remain stable at 14%; the 65-74 age group will increase from 14% to 16%; and the 75+ age group will increase from 17% to 27% of the total population. The majority (57%) of Roseville's head of households will be more than 55 years of age. Among cities with more than 10,000 population, Roseville has the second highest percentage of residents over the age of 65 (21%) and ranks highest among the largest metro cities with over 3% of its current population over the age of 85 (City of Roseville, 2003).

### **What are the risks associated with an older population?**

According to Petraglia (1991) as people age, changes in their sensory and physical functions increase their vulnerability to accidental injury. Typical changes may include diminished visual acuity, depth perception, hearing and odor perception, a faltering sense of balance, and slower movements and reflexes. Together with more fragile bones, vulnerable joints, and other impairments caused by medical conditions and chronic ailments, these changes mean that older people are more likely to suffer serious disability and even death from accidents (Petraglia, 1991).

According to the NCIPC, injury is a serious threat to older adults. In the United States 37,461 people ages 65 and older died from injury in the year 2000. An estimated

2,669,606 people from the same age group suffered non-fatal injuries during the same time frame (NCIPCa, 2004).

According to the NCIPC from 1999 to 2001 the ten leading causes of death in the state of Minnesota were (NCIPCb, 2004):

1. Heart Disease	25,286	(25.3%)
2. Malignant Neoplasms	23,871	(23.8%)
3. Cerebrovascular	8,194	(8.25%)
4. Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease	5,647	(5.6%)
5. Alzheimer's Disease	3,401	(3.4%)
6. Diabetes Mellitus	3,335	(3.3%)
7. Unintentional Injury	2,795	(2.8%)
8. Influenza & Pneumonia	2,648	(2.6%)
9. Nephritis	1,907	(1.9%)
10. Parkinson's Disease	1,290	(1.3%)

According the NCIPC, the following were the top ten causes of unintentional injuries resulting in death in the State of Minnesota from 1999 to 2001 (NCIPCb, 2004):

1. Fall	1,143	(40.9%)
2. Unspecified	625	(22.4%)
3. Motor Vehicle Traffic	527	(18.8%)
4. Suffocation	154	(5.5%)
5. Natural/Environment	75	(2.7%)
6. Fire/Burn	52	(1.9%)
7. Poisoning	49	(1.8%)

8. Other Spec.	41	(1.5%)
9. Drowning	32	(1.1%)
10. Other Land Transport	28	(1.0%)

More than a third of adults 65 and older fall each year. They are hospitalized for fall-related injuries more than five times that of other causes and 20% to 30% suffer injuries that reduce mobility and increase the risk of premature death. The cost of these injuries in 1994 in the United States was 20.2 billion. By 2020, the cost is expected to reach 32.4 billion (NCIPCc, 2004).

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in 2002 there were 26 million people over the age of 70 in the United States. There were 19.1 million licensed drivers over the age of 65 in 2001, which is a 32% increase from 1991. In 2002, drivers the age of 70 or older were involved in 4,689 traffic fatalities and 836 pedestrian fatalities (NHTSA, 2002).

In the United States, 7,525 people over the age of 65 died in vehicle crashes in 2001. In 2002, more than 220,000 older adults suffered nonfatal injuries as occupants in motor vehicle crashes. Age-related decreases in vision, hearing, cognitive functions, and physical impairments may affect older individuals driving abilities (NCIPCd, 2004).

According to the USFA, people over the age of 65 are at the greatest risk of dying. On average, 959 Americans in the same age group died in home fires and an additional 2,425 were injured. People over the age of 80 die in fires at a rate three times higher than the rest of the population (USFAa, 2004).

Older adults are at higher risk of death and injury due to fire because of decreased mobility, health, sight, and hearing may limit or impair a person's ability to escape during

a fire emergency. Depending on the person and their physical limitations, many of the actions necessary to protect themselves may require help from others (USFAB, 2004).

Cooking accidents are the leading cause of fire related injuries for older Americans. Unsafe use of smoking materials, heating equipment and faulty wiring in older homes are the other major threats facing older adults (USFAA, 2004).

### **What programs are currently in place to assist with an older population?**

The Roseville Fire Department does not currently have a program in place to deal with the risks associated with an older population. The fire marshal and fire inspector have been asked at times to address risk associated with older adults in nursing homes; however there is no set curriculum, program or message. The safety training has been essentially a question and answer sessions.

The City of Roseville, through its parks and Recreation department offers some programs to adults 55 and older. These activities include Bocce Ball, Senior Softball, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) 55 Alive Course, Over 50 & Fit, Tap For Older Adults, Bridge Club, and the Senior Club #5 (City of Roseville, 2004).

The City of Roseville's police department offers the *Are You Okay* service to senior residents. This is a computer generated system that contacts those that are signed up for the program by calling them on the phone and making sure they can answer the call. If there is no answer, a member of the police department contacts a designated friend or relative to check on the participant. The police department also provides tips on how to prevent fraud, contact numbers for victims of crimes and participates in a bi-annual informational safety seminar sponsored by the Roseville Police Department, the

Roseville Fire Department, the Little Canada Fire Department, the Fairview Senior Citizen Center and local businesses (City of Roseville, 2004). This seminar was held for the first time two years ago. The reviews by the participants indicated that the fire departments presentation was the most informative and ranked the highest in quality.

Another resource that is available to the citizens of Roseville is the Roseville Area Senior Program, which is co-sponsored by the Roseville Area Schools and the North Suburban Senior Council. Additional funding comes from Ramsey County, American Red Cross of St. Paul, Senior Service Consortium of Ramsey County, and the Metro Area Agency on Aging Inc. as part of the Older Americans Act (Roseville Area Senior Program, 2004).

The Senior Center offers activities and services such as health programs, meals on wheels, wellness, senior dining, discussion groups, educational programs, transportation, social events, senior craft shop, recreational activities, special interest groups, caregiver support groups, drop-in lounge, dances, newsletter, senior chorus, and volunteer opportunities (Roseville Area Senior Program, 2004). The center also serves as a information warehouse, where residents can find contact numbers for all sorts of needs.

### **What programs are other communities using to address risks associated with older populations?**

The Redmond Fire Department of the City of Redmond, WA participates in the Fall Factor Prevention Program. This is a county-wide program that offers free home safety assessments and installation of free fall prevention devices to individuals who are at least 65 years old, live independently, and have fallen in the past year. Individuals are



then asked to participate in a fall study for one year. Through Fall Factors, firefighters and public educators perform home assessments and install risk reduction devices such as tub grab bars, toilet assist bars, shower seats, bed assist railing, slips, bath mats, night lights, tread tape, smoke alarms, and carpet tape for study participants (Redmond Fire Department, 2004).

Palm Beach County, Florida Fire-Rescue has developed a senior training program entitled *Mature Adults Teaching Community Helpers* (MATCH). This program is an effort to assist senior citizens, reduce the number of public assists, increase the value of service given to senior citizens, and to provide community education. Feedback from those that have participated in the program has been very positive (Penney, 1997).

According to the National Resource Center on Aging and Injury (NRCAI), the State of Florida has developed the *Florida Injury Prevention Program for Seniors* (FLIPS). This program works with local agencies, including fire departments to conduct the program which includes fire safety, poison and medication safety, a statewide falls prevention conference, mini-workshops throughout the state, and provides educational brochures and pamphlets to agencies who serve Florida seniors (NRCAI, 2004).

The City of Oklahoma, OK, uses the *Remembering When* program as a major part of their program for senior citizens. They also have coalitions with several other senior organizations and agencies. In addition to doing presentations themselves, they have several *Remembering When* presentation kits that can be checked out by their volunteers when ever they need them. They also conducted two presentations a year at most of their nursing homes and senior centers. These include presentations on fire safety, fire extinguishers, and emergency preparedness including evacuation and safety precautions

for fire, tornado, and other emergency situations (J. Long, personal communication, March 23, 2004, Appendix A).

In 1996 the Phoenix, AZ Fire Department developed a team to concentrate their efforts on fire safety education for seniors. Members of the department formed a team that included many public and private agencies. The goal of the team was to provide fire and life safety information to seniors. The program included safety information to prevent fires, trips and falls in the home as well as smoking and space heater safety (Phoenix Fire Department, 2004).

### **What intervention strategies can be developed to address these risks in Roseville?**

Smerz (2003), as a part of his research, conducted a nation-wide survey to determine the extent of fire department involvement in providing safety education to their communities targeted to the elderly population. He found that of the 26 departments that responded to the survey, 22 (85%) indicated that they performed elderly fire education in the community. Thirteen of the departments (50%) indicated that they also provide life safety programs for their elder population (Smerz, 2003).

Smerz (2003) also found that the majority of the departments surveyed used a combination of nationally and locally developed programs for fire and life safety education. Noting that the most popular national program used by departments for both fire and life safety is the NFPA *Remembering When* program.

In April of 1999, the North American Coalition for Fire and Life Safety Education (NACFLSE) conducted a symposium to examine fire and life safety challenges. From these meetings and discussions a document entitled *Solutions 2000* was produced.

Within this document a number of suggestions were made for each of the groups the coalition focused on. For older adults, the following suggestions were made: (USFA, 1999)

- Promote life safety, not just fire safety, in programs addressing older adults.
- Identify the areas in fire safety that is lacking specifics for adults.
- Combine the expertise of the fire service industry and older adult advocacy groups (e.g. American Association of Retired Persons) to develop fire prevention and education programs, in addition to an effective way to market the new programs.
- Include life safety education materials and programs for fire safety.
- Encourage the fire service to collaborate with advocacy groups to expand the outreach of its message and promote the well-being of older adults.
- Do not isolate or single out older adults in fire safety programs; older adults prefer mainstream messages that apply to all sections of the population.
- Follow the advice of recent market research studies that shows older adults do not want to be singled out; many feel that it supports a stereotype that the elderly are frail and helpless, which is not their self-image and using that image may turn off from fire safety messages.
- Develop universal fire safety messages that pertain to all sections of the population.
- Solicit advocacy groups to add their own subtleties to universal fire safety messages for their older constituents. Test, market, and package these materials.

- Promote fire sprinkler systems for all homes and for all care institutions; fire sprinklers can help save older adults, who are the age group at highest risk.

In April of 2001 the NACFLSE met again and created another report, known as the *Beyond Solutions 2000* report. This report represents ways to address the suggested “solutions” that were formulated in the first report. Their suggestions for assisting older adults are the following: (USFA, 2000)

- Make messages relevant to concerns and life styles of older adults. Define the primary benefits of life safety protection from fire in an adjoining structure, and the secondary benefits of preservation of property.
- Identify the economic benefits and sources of assistance
- Select messengers who are believable and trusted because the messenger is as important as the message. Network with service professionals who work with older adults so they may share fire safety information with their client base. Tap into service learning projects for delivery systems where one-on-one contact is warranted.
- Promote a wellness model that emphasizes positive outcomes for total health, not only absence of disease and injury.
- Design materials that are intergenerational and that can be used with all ages living in the home.
- Make materials affordable, readily available, and easily understood.
- Keep the fire service abreast of current technology and recommend practice regarding automatic detection and suppression devices.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has developed a *Check for Safety* home fall prevention checklist for older adults. This checklist asks about hazards found in each room of the home and offers suggestions to mitigate each problem. It also includes tips for preventing falls (NCIPCe, 2004).

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has also developed a home safety checklist for older consumers. This checklist is organized by areas of the home. They have identified some potential hazards that need to be checked in more than one area of the home. When a safety hazard is identified, they also suggest possible solutions and/or fixes. They encourage people to periodically review the checklist and encourage people to copy and use the material they have presented (CPSC, 1986).

In 1996, the Phoenix Fire Department recognized the need for a community outreach program focused on senior citizens. This program included a multitude of other local city and community agencies to help coordinate and facilitate the program. The original goal of the program was to concentrate efforts on providing fire safety information to seniors living in high-rise apartments. As needs additional needs and opportunities were identified, the program was updated. This includes information for safety in the kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, living room, smoking, and space heater safety (Phoenix Fire Department, 2004). The program now includes not only fire prevention messages, but also life safety messages.

In 1992, the USFA produced a program entitled Let's Retire Fire. The program is a fire safety program, which was developed by drawing on the ideas of programs that other departments were conducting throughout the country. It offers a variety of ways to

create fire safety programs for older adults. It gives examples of presentations and possible public service announcements that fire departments can use to create their own customized programs as well as offering preformatted materials that can be used (USFA, 1992).

The NFPA offers a fall and fire prevention program for older adults entitled *Remembering When*. This program covers 16 key safety messages; which includes eight fire and eight fall prevention topics. It was developed by experts and practitioners from national and local safety organizations and included focus group testing. The program was designed to be implemented by a coalition of agencies. This includes local fire departments, service clubs, social clubs, and others. (NFPA, 2004).

In summary, the literature review has demonstrated that the demographics in the City of Roseville are similar, if not more striking than that of the rest of the nation. There are many identified risks associated with our older population, which if addressed may be reduced. There has been little done to actively promote life safety in the City of Roseville. A risk reduction program can be developed based on the materials available from other communities and national publications. This program can then be used as an intervention strategy to reduce the risks to the older citizens living in the City of Roseville.

## **PROCEDURES**

The purpose of this applied research project was to identify model risk reduction programs that are available and to develop a community risk reduction program for older

adults in the City of Roseville. Action research methodology was used to complete this project.

This document is formatted according to the American Psychological Association Fifth Edition text in conjunction with the *Operational Policies and Procedures for Applied Research* from the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program.

Research and data collection began with a preliminary search at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center in October 2003. Research and data collection was also conducted at the Minnesota State College's and Universities Fire / EMS / Safety Center library in St. Paul, MN in the spring of 2004. Technical reports, articles in magazines, previous Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Projects, and text books were used to gain information regarding this subject matter. The Internet was also used to gain information pertaining to the questions that were researched.

The criteria that were used to help focus on and identify information for this applied research project had to be relevant to the subject matter and the purpose of the research project. The information that was used also had to be as current as possible. The procedures that were used in this project included the following:

- The researcher acquired current and projected demographic information of the City of Roseville.
- A data search of risks associated with an older population.
- Local informational search of what programs are currently in place to assist with an older population.
- Informational search of what programs other communities are using to address risks associated with an older population.

- Informational search on what intervention strategies can be developed to address the risks that were identified.

### **Demographics in the City of Roseville**

The researcher was able to get a copy of a document produced by the community development department at the City of Roseville. This document allowed the researcher to accurately and thoroughly define what the current and projected demographic changes are for the City of Roseville.

### **Risks Associated with an Older Population**

The researcher found many organizations which have produced documentation that clearly defines the risks associated with an elderly population. The researcher focused on those risks and injuries which are considered unintentional, with the idea that these injuries are largely preventable.

### **Programs Currently in Place**

The researcher investigated what programs are currently in place to assist with an older population. This included a review of what the City of Roseville, through its department's offers, including courses and schedules.

Two visits were made to the office of the Roseville Area Senior Program. During these visits brochures and other documentation was gathered that describes what the program has to offer and how it operates.



### **Programs That Others are Using**

An internet search was conducted to find out what other departments and communities are using to address risks associated with an older population. This resulted in locating a number of websites that had very little to no useful information. A few departments however had some useful information that aided in developing the attached risk reduction program (Appendix B).

The researcher also made contact with Frank Richardson, one of the researchers instructors of the Leading Community Risks reduction course held at the National Fire Academy in October of 2003. Mr. Richardson advised the researcher to contact Chief Paul Menches of the Onalaska Fire Department, WI. Contact was also made with Frank Cook, a classmate who was also conducting relevant research to find out if he knew of any fire departments that had risk reduction programs specific to addressing risks associated with older adults. He advised the researcher to contact Chief John Long of the Oklahoma City Fire Department, OK.

### **Intervention Strategies**

The researcher used what information he had gathered in answering the previous questions to develop intervention strategies. Programs throughout the nation which currently exist to reduce risks associated with an older population were identified. These programs within themselves lend strategies that can be used at a local level.

### **Limitations**

The researcher was limited in obtaining data that specifically represents the unintentional injuries suffered by Roseville residents. The Roseville Fire Department does not respond to emergency medical calls and the data is not currently available for retrieval.

The researcher had a difficult time gathering what exactly other departments are doing for risk reduction to older adults. Many departments claimed to address risks associated with older adults, however upon further inspection, most departments did not have a formal program which could be adopted.

## **RESULTS**

### **What are the current and projected demographic changes for older adults in the City of Roseville?**

The 2003 census data for elderly persons living in Roseville revealed that 14% of the population is 55-64 years old. This figure is predicted to remain stable through 2020. The age group from 65-74 will increase from 14% to 16% and the 75+ age group will increase from 17% to 27%. The majority (57%) of the head of households will be more than 55 years of age.

The 2000 national census reveals that the elderly population in the City of Roseville (43%) is more than double the overall average in the state (12.1%) and the nation (12.4%).

### **What are the risks associated with an older population?**

The elderly, due to their physical stature and decreased sensory functions are at a higher risk for unintentional injury. According to the data obtained, unintentional injury is one of the leading causes of death on a national and state level. Falls are the number one cause of unintentional deaths amongst the elderly and motor vehicle accidents and burns are also in the top ten.

More than a third of the people that are 65+ fall each year and most are very likely to fall again once they are injured. Many of these injuries result in long-term disability. People that have fallen are also more susceptible to premature death (NCIPC, 2004).

There were 19.1 million older drivers in the nation in 2001. In 2002, drivers the age of 70 or older were involved in over 4,600 traffic fatalities and 836 pedestrian fatalities. Statistics show that the number of older drivers, fatalities and injuries continue to rise as the percentage of the population over the age of 55 grows.

The USFA found that people over the age of 65 are at the greatest risk of dying in a fire. On average 959 older adults die and 2,425 additional people are injured. People over the age of 80 are three more times likely to die in a fire. Cooking accidents, unsafe smoking materials, heating equipment and faulty wiring are the most common causes of these fires.

### **What programs are currently in place to assist with an older population?**

The Roseville Fire Department does not currently have a program in place to deal with the risks associated with an older population. The fire marshal and inspector have

made presentations to this population group on request. However, it has been on a casual basis, without a specific plan or curriculum.

The City of Roseville, through the police and park and recreation departments offer some resources for older adults. However, most of the programs are either social events and are reactive rather than proactive measures.

The Roseville Area Senior Program offers a tremendous amount of information and services to older adults as well as family members of older adults. Despite this, there is no specific program that proactively tries to reduce all of the risks associated with older adults. Most of the programs are socially based.

### **What programs are other communities using to address risks associated with older populations?**

There are a number of other fire departments that participate in risk reduction for older adults. Most of the departments' programs focus on reducing the risks that have been identified as unintentional. Most departments do not seem to have formalized programs. Of those that do have formalized programs, most use the *Remembering When* program developed by the NFPA.

Some departments also provide home safety inspections that specifically look for fall and fire hazards. They offer suggestions to fix items identified as hazards. One of the departments identified has taken their program beyond education. They offer services that actually mitigate the hazards by installing items such as grab bars and slip resistant tape to rugs.

Regardless of the level of services offered, some common themes emerged. One theme was that departments received positive feedback about their programs from those they serve. The other was that the fire departments worked with other agencies to develop mutually beneficial relationships. These relationships in return assisted the audience they were designed to aid; older adults.

### **What intervention strategies can be developed to address these risks in Roseville?**

Many fire departments throughout the nation are involved in providing safety education to the older population. The majority of the departments use a combination of nationally and locally developed curriculum for fire and life safety education.

The NACFLSE supports and encourages fire departments to become involved in fire and life safety education for older adults. They have offered a number of suggestions to help guide the fire service and others on what to and how to provide education to address the risks associated with an older population.

There are many other organizations that offer similar advice. Some of them are the CDC, the CPSC, and the USFA. All of these organizations offer materials that may be used to develop a risk reduction program for older adults on a local level. Most of them also provide hand out materials free of charge.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Relationship between Study Results and Literature**

The elderly population of the City of Roseville is growing at an unprecedented rate. It is predicted that by 2020, 43% of the population will be over the age of 55. By

2020, the majority (57%) of the head of households will be more than 55 years of age. Roseville has the second highest percentage of residents over the age of 65 and has the highest percentage of citizens over the age of 85 in the local metro area. These figures are higher than the national average.

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According to the NCIPC more than a third of adults 65 and older fall each year. These injuries (20% to 30% of the time) leave them with decreased mobility and increased risk of premature death.

Cooking accidents are the leading cause of fire related injuries for older Americans. Unsafe use of smoking materials, heating equipment and faulty wiring in older homes are the other major threats facing older adults (USFA, 2004).

The City of Roseville and the Roseville Area Senior Program offer a number of services to the older residents. Many of these programs are socially based or reactive rather than proactive. There does not appear to be a comprehensive risk reduction program available to the citizens.

A number of fire departments across the country participate in elderly risk reduction programs. Most of the programs are based on the NFPA *Remembering When* curriculum, along with supplementation with their own materials. Some departments go

so far as to offer home safety checks. A common theme that was noticed during the research was the importance of working together with other community stakeholders to make their programs successful.

According to a nationwide survey conducted by Smerz (2003), 85% of the respondents indicated they performed elderly fire education in the community. Of those surveyed, 50% indicated they also provide life safety education for older adults.

On two occasions, preeminent experts were invited to gather for a symposium sponsored by the North American Coalition for Fire and Life Safety Education to examine fire and life safety challenges. They identified older adults as one of the highest risk groups for unintentional injury. They identified why they are at risk and offered solutions for how to create programs that address those risks.

There are many organizations that lend advice on how to reduce risks for older adults as well as offer materials to help achieve this goal. They include the CDC, the CPSC, and the USFA. Oftentimes these agencies offer handout materials for free. The organizations allow and encourage users to reproduce the materials they have created.

### **Interpretation of Results**

The demographics of the City of Roseville are quite remarkable. The city is faced with an elderly population that is disproportionately larger than that of the state and national averages. This population, based on the data collected, represents our highest at-risk group in the community. The data collected indicates that this trend will continue until 2020.

Older adults, due to changes in their sensory and physical functions are more prone to unintentional injuries. These include falls, burns, and motor vehicle accidents. Many of the risks associated with these injuries are preventable.

There are currently programs offered to older adults offered by the City of Roseville and the Roseville Area Senior Program. Most of these programs however, are socially based and seem to be more reactive than proactive.

Other communities have programs in place for older adults. Most of these programs are based on a combination of nationally and locally developed curriculum. This seems to make the most sense, since natural forces such as geography, climate, and environment are different throughout the United States. It seems prudent to develop a program that uses available resources, while also supplementing it with material that will have the most impact on a local level.

There appears to be a multitude of strategies that can be used to help implement a risk reduction program for older adults. It seems as though the best approach is to promote life safety, not just fire safety. This should be done in cooperation with other industry experts in order to have the greatest effect. This will help to make the message more credible and consistent. Working together with others may also make materials more affordable.

### **Implications for the Organization**

The Roseville Fire Department has an opportunity to provide education for the prevention of unintentional injuries to older adults in the City of Roseville. According to the demographics of the city, this is a prime time to institute an older adult risk reduction



program. This program can be developed without significant costs and administered by members of the department with minimal training.

Firefighters show a care and concern for their citizens by the nature of the work they do already. They are an excellent pool of personnel that have the training and knowledge to help others prevent injuries. Most of the members of the Roseville Fire Department are well educated and highly motivated. Some members have shown an interest in participating in assisting older adults, prior to this research project. An older adult risk reduction program would help to focus their energies toward a common goal and mission.

Due to national, state and local funding cuts, it is imperative that the Roseville Fire Department become involved with its citizen on a personal level. Survival into the future shouldn't be the reason for participating in such a program, rather the reward for doing so. It seems as though apathy and a lack of department marketing directly to the citizens, makes reductions in the fire departments budget painless. In order to combat this, the department needs to develop grass roots programs that reach out to its citizens. Based on the information that has been gathered, it seems as though developing a risk reduction program for senior citizens is the best place to start.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The problem was the Roseville Fire Department did not have a risk reduction program for older adults. The purpose of this applied research project was to identify model risk reduction programs that are available and to develop a community risk reduction program for older adults in the City of Roseville. The research that was

conducted and the information that has been gathered have enabled the author to create such a program (Appendix B).

The research project demonstrated a need for a risk reduction program for older adults. Based on the information gathered from the literature review and results of this project, the following recommendations are designed to facilitate the development of an older adult risk reduction program:

1. The current prevention program should become more proactive and expanded to include risks associated with older adults.
2. The older adult risk reduction program should be coordinated by the Roseville Fire Department, but also include other stakeholders, such as the parks and recreation department, police department, and the Roseville Area Seniors program.
3. Support of the city council should be sought.
4. The *Remembering When* curriculum package should be purchased from the NFPA and used in conjunction with the attached materials.
5. The fire department should offer home safety inspections to older adults in the City of Roseville.
6. Handout materials should be produced that can be distributed at community events.
7. A public awareness campaign about the risks associated with older adults should be conducted.
8. Local media should be made aware of the initiation of the program and asked to publicize its availability to the public.

9. An ongoing evaluation of the efficacy of the program should be conducted and changes should be made as necessary.

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**APPENDIX A**

-----Original Message-----

**From:** john.long@okc.gov [mailto:john.long@okc.gov]

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 23, 2004 12:54 PM

**To:** greg.peterson@ci.roseville.mn.us

**Subject:** RE: Elderly Risk Reduction

Greg,

We use the NFPA program "Remembering When" as a major part of our program for senior citizens. We have coalitions with several senior organizations and agencies such as; Oklahoma City Housing Authority, Link to Life, Community Action Agency, Areawide Aging Agency, National Indian Council on Aging, Oklahoma County Triad (Sheriff's Dept.), and several local rehab. centers. In addition to doing safety presentations for senior groups ourselves, we have also trained some senior volunteers to do the program. We put together several "Remembering When" presentation kits that can be checked out by our volunteers whenever they do a presentation.

Other than that, we do two presentations a year at most of the nursing homes and senior centers in the city. One of these covers general fire safety and fire extinguisher use. The other normally covers emergency preparedness, including evacuation and safety precautions for fire, tornado, and other emergency situations.

Our free smoke alarm program, (which includes free installation), also reaches a lot of seniors. We distribute 2000-2500 smoke alarms every year.

I don't know if this helps you much. Let me know if you need any additional info.

Good luck with your project, John

-----Original Message-----

**From:** greg.peterson@ci.roseville.mn.us [mailto:greg.peterson@ci.roseville.mn.us]

**Sent:** Saturday, March 20, 2004 3:05 PM

**To:** Long, John H.

**Subject:** Elderly Risk Reduction

Chief Long,

I am an EFO student through the National Fire Academy. A classmate of mine informed me that your department has exceptional community outreach programs. I am currently working on a research paper for the last class that I took at the academy. My research project is on developing an elderly risk reduction program for our city.

Do you have a program like this?

If so, are you willing to share what you have developed?

If not, do you know anyone that has such a program?

**APPENDIX B**

The attached materials represent the Roseville's Older Adult Risk Reduction Program.

This program was created by using the materials and ideas gathered while  
conducting research for this project.



# Risk Reduction For Older Adults



Roseville Fire Department  
2660 Civic Center Drive  
Roseville, MN 55113  
651-792-7009

## Program Description

The elderly population of the City of Roseville is growing at an unprecedented rate. It is predicted that by 2020, 43% of the population will be over the age of 55. By 2020, the majority (57%) of the head of households will be more than 55 years of age. Roseville has the second highest percentage of residents over the age of 65 and has the highest percentage of citizens over the age of 85 in the local metro area. These figures are higher than the national average.

Older adults age 65 and older are at the highest risk for death and injury due to fire and other unintentional injuries. Due to the physical and sensory degradation of older adults, they are more susceptible to unintentional injuries. According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC), in Minnesota unintentional injuries are the seventh leading cause of death in the state. Falls are the number one cause of death due to unintentional injury. Motor vehicle accidents as well as fire/burns are in the top ten.

According to the NCIPC more than a third of adults 65 and older fall each year. These injuries (20% to 30% of the time) leave them with decreased mobility and increased risk of premature death.

According to the United States Fire Administration Cooking accidents are the leading cause of fire related injuries for older Americans. Unsafe use of smoking materials, heating equipment and faulty wiring in older homes are the other major threats facing older adults.

The City of Roseville and the Roseville Area Senior Program offer a number of services to the older residents. Many of these programs are socially based or reactive rather than proactive. There does not appear to be a comprehensive risk reduction program available to the citizens.

The Roseville Fire Department recognized the need for a risk reduction program for older adults in the City of Roseville. Therefore, the following program was created. This program includes the use of the *Remembering When* program developed by the Center for Disease Control and the National Fire Protection Agency. It also includes additional materials that help to implement the messages that are set forth in the curriculum. This includes fire escape plans and a home safety checklist.

## **Presentation Techniques**

Successful, educational and interactive presentations for seniors include:

- Know your audience
- Hire personnel with experience in senior issues
- Slide with large font and few words per slide
- Thirty to forty-five minute presentation
- Audience participation
- Items for educational participation
- Repetition of key messages
- Recognition (Plaque/Certificate)
- Humor
- Patience
- Treat them with respect
- Ask questions
- Keep it simple
- Give examples
- Emphasize the positive

## **Marketing**

- Large 17" x 24" posters
- Flyers
- Brochures
- Public Service Announcements
  - Newspaper
  - Television
  - Radio
- City web site
- Advertising in cooperation with local organizations
  - Roseville Area Senior Center / Program
  - Meals on Wheels
  - Ect.

## Sample Introduction Letter

To Whom It May Concern:

Proper planning helps to insure the success of the risk reduction program. As the contact person at your facility, your help is needed to make the upcoming presentation a positive and effective learning experience. Please take responsibility for having at least half of the residents attend. The program will only be successful if most of the people are reached.

We will provide the posters and flyers for advertising. As a part of the program, residents will also receive fire escape plans, a home safety checklist and fact sheets regarding fire prevention and risk reduction.

Our goal is to present our message to as many residents as possible. We are relying on you to make this happen. Some things others have used to entice people to attend are; laundry coupons for a free wash or dry, snacks, PA system reminder, scheduling our presentation before or after another event, and drawing for prizes.

The following guidelines have been developed to help you prepare your facility and residents for the presentation.

### **Schedule presentation**

#### **One week prior to presentation:**

- Display posters (we provide)
- Distribute flyers (we provide)
- Reserve room for presentation

#### **The day of the presentation:**

- Remind residents of the presentation
- Arrange seating for residents
- Offer assistance to mobility-impaired residents

#### **After the presentation:**

- Arrange for the fire plans to be posted in each apartment
- Keep handouts

Thank you for your interest in the program. We appreciate the time and effort you are willing to put forth to make your residents and facility a safer place.



## Program Evaluation

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Thank you for your assistance. We hope that everyone at your facility will remember and practice the safety messages that were presented. Please answer the following questions honestly and thoroughly. This will help us to improve the program. Please return this survey to the Roseville Fire Department. (Envelope provided)

	<b>Please Circle</b>
Was the program effective in teaching safety to your residents?	Yes    No
Was the program effective in raising awareness?	Yes    No
Was the presentation easy to understand?	Yes    No
Were the speakers able to hold the interest of the participants?	Yes    No
Were the posters helpful?	Yes    No
Were the flyers helpful?	Yes    No
Are the handouts useful tools?	Yes    No
Have the fire plans been posted for each resident?	Yes    No

Do you have any suggestions to make the program more effective?

Thank you for completing this evaluation.

# FIRE PLAN

---

## General Instructions for Resident Manager

*Facility Name Here*

1. When a fire is reported to you, find out its location.  
(fire alarm panel or caller)
2. Call 911 immediately and report the fire.
3. Give your facility name, address and location of the fire.
4. If possible, find location of the fire and take charge.
5. Direct someone else to meet the fire department.

# RESIDENT FIRE PLAN

---

**In case of fire, no matter how minor it may appear to be, follow these rules.**

If the fire is **inside** your apartment and you can not safely extinguish it:

- Evacuate the apartment; close the door as you leave
- Leave the door unlocked for fire department access
- Call or direct someone to call **911** immediately
- Activate the fire alarm pull box in the hallway

If the fire is **outside** of your apartment:

- Do Not Open the door.
- Seal the bottom of the door with a wet cloth or blanket to keep smoke out.
- Wait for further assistance or instructions.

If evacuation of the building is necessary, do not re-enter until permission is given by fire department personnel.

## **\*Do Not Use Elevators\***

Please read these instructions once a week.

Know where the closest exits are to your apartment.



# Older Adult Risk Reduction Program

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## **Introduction**

- Department
- History
- Station location
- Staff/Personnel
- Call types/volume
- Services offered

## **General Safety**

- Risks associated with age
- Have someone to check your welfare
- Telephone accessibility
- Seeking help from others / Special needs

## **Remembering When program**

### Fire Safety

- CDC – Fire death rates
- Smoking
- Space heaters
- Kitchen safety
- Stop, Drop, and Roll
- Smoke alarms
- Escape routes
- Emergency numbers
- Exit drills

### Fall Safety

- CDC – Fall rates
- Exercise
- Take your time
- Clear the way
- Vision
- Proper lighting
- Non-slip surfaces
- Grab bars
- Rugs and carpeting
- Stair safety
- Proper foot wear



**Hand Outs**

- Escape plans
  - Review
  - Create
  - Practice
- USFA Fact Sheet
  - Review
- Home Safety Checklist
  - Review
  - On your own
  - Fire department personnel

**Questions & Answers**

**Sample Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Deputy Chief Greg Peterson  
Phone: 651-792-7306**ROSEVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT TO HELP REDUCE DEATH AND INJURY  
AMONG OLDER ADULTS**

Roseville, MN – The Roseville Fire Department today announced that it is launching a risk reduction campaign to help reduce unintentional death and injuries to Roseville's older adults. The campaign was launched by the fire administration in response to the high rate of unintentional death and injury in this age group. The campaign, which seeks to partner with organizations having direct contact with this at-risk population, is a public awareness campaign consisting of fact sheets, brochures and materials to use in contacting the partnering organization's local media, including print, radio and television public service announcements.

The elderly population of the City of Roseville is growing at an unprecedented rate. It is predicted that by 2020, 43% of the population will be over the age of 55. By 2020, the majority (57%) of the head of households will be more than 55 years of age. Roseville has the second highest percentage of residents over the age of 65 and has the highest percentage of citizens over the age of 85 in the local metro area. These figures are higher than the national average.

Older adults age 65 and older are at the highest risk for death and injury due to fire and other unintentional injuries. Due to the physical and sensory degradation of older adults, they are more susceptible to unintentional injuries. According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC), in Minnesota unintentional injuries are the seventh leading cause of death in the state. Falls are the number one cause of death due to unintentional injury. Motor vehicle accidents as well as fire/burns are in the top ten.

According to the NCIPC more than a third of adults 65 and older fall each year. These injuries (20% to 30% of the time) leave them with decreased mobility and increased risk of premature death.

Seniors over the age of 65 are at greater risk of death from fire than any other age group in the United States, according to the Roseville Fire Department and the United States Fire Administration (USFA), an entity of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

In fact, USFA data indicates that seniors between the ages of 65 and 75 have a fire death rate twice that of the national average. Adults between 75 and 85 years old are three times as likely to die from fire and adults over 85 years old are four times as likely to die from fire.

A significant factor behind this high risk of fire death among seniors is smoking. Smoking fires are the leading cause of fire deaths among the elderly. Approximately 15 percent of adults over 65 years of age use tobacco products. Heating and cooking fires are the second- and third- leading causes of fire related deaths in older adults. Additional risks include physical or cognitive impairments created by the aging process.

"More than 1,200 Americans over the age of 65 die as a result of fire annually. Residential fires injure on average 3,000 older adults each year. These are staggering numbers," says Deputy Chief Peterson. "Fire really is a matter of life or death. Americans need to take a serious look at the importance of fire prevention, fire safety and education, particularly as it pertains to senior citizens."

The Roseville Fire Department and the U.S. Fire Administration encourages seniors, as well as the general public, to increase fire safety in the home and offers the following tips:

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home. A working smoke alarm more than doubles the chances of surviving a fire. Batteries in smoke alarms should be changed once a year. Some homes are equipped with "hard wired" smoke alarms, which connect to the household electrical system and may or may not have a battery backup. If you have a hardwired smoke alarm that uses a back-up battery, change this battery yearly as well. Test each alarm monthly and use new batteries when replacing old ones.
- Plan and Practice Escape Routes - USFA recommends knowing escape plans and planning escapes around capabilities. Know at least two exits from every room and be sure you know how to open your windows.
- Never smoke in bed and never leave smoking materials unattended. Collect all smoking materials in large, deep ashtrays.
- Remember not to leave food unattended on the stove and don't wear loose clothing while cooking.
- If you have a fire extinguisher, learn how to use it.
- Homes more than 40 years old are three times more likely to catch on fire from electrical causes than homes 11 to 20 years old. Have a professional electrician inspect your home's electrical wiring system at least every 10 years, and make recommended repairs. Never overload the electrical system.

The Roseville Fire Department recognizes the need for a risk reduction program for older adults in the City of Roseville. Therefore, a new program has been created. This program includes the use of the *Remembering When* curriculum developed by the Center for Disease Control and the National Fire Protection Agency. It also includes additional materials that help to implement the messages presented. You can obtain further information by contacting the Roseville Fire Department at 651-792-7009.

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