

Author Interview

Beverley Walker

Community Risk Reduction Principles and Practice



As part of the Jones & Bartlett Learning Public Safety Group Author Interview series, we had the chance to talk with Beverley Walker about her upcoming book, **Community Risk Reduction: Principles and Practice**. In this interview, Beverley talks about her experience, her thoughts on the book, what's important in the book, and why she thinks it's a valuable contribution to the fire service and emergency medical services (EMS) community.

1 Can you tell us about your background in the fire service?

I joined the fire service in 1990, beginning as a civilian employee. I fell in love with the job and ended up pursuing it as a career. I worked for the LaGrange (Georgia) Fire Department for 15 years, where I was promoted to lieutenant and in charge of the Fire and Life Safety Education and Prevention program. I eventually left and joined Hall County (Georgia) Fire Services, where I continued working in fire and life safety education and prevention. During this time, I branched out into injury prevention and grew connected at the national level by becoming an instructor for the National Fire Academy. For a few years at Hall County, I also was able to work in the training division, instructing new firefighters in the department.

2 Since this book is a first edition, what are the most important topics within it that you think readers should know about?

One major topic covered within the text is community risk reduction and its relationship to prevention and education. Many times, people within the fire service think community risk reduction is a new name for the fire prevention bureau. In reality, community risk reduction is a philosophy about how the entire organization conducts itself and the work that it does; community risk reduction is not only relevant to one small part of the organization.

Additionally, the book discusses how community risk reduction is a process that looks at each individual community and/or service area and involves forming a plan for each area based on its unique characteristics. Community risk reduction is not a "one and done" activity; it's an ongoing process.

3 What are 2-3 reasons why you think someone in the fire service should choose this book over another resource for learning about community risk reduction?

This is the only textbook available on community risk reduction as of today, so I'd say that is one reason. Besides that, this book combines resources and guidelines from the National Fire Academy, the National Fire Protection Association, and Vision 20/20. I tried my best to combine information from these organizations when writing the textbook; I feel that it's a good culmination of all the community risk reduction information out there. The text doesn't "play favorites" between these organizations; instead, it serves as a good "one-stop-shop" for community risk reduction.

4 Community risk reduction has become such an important topic for fire and emergency services organizations. What has contributed to that increase in relevance, and what does the future look like for community risk reduction practitioners?

I began my career in fire life safety and prevention education before also adding in injury prevention. Through these fields, one thing I've noticed about community risk reduction is that it's not just the job of one person or one group; it's an overall philosophy that allows the organization to meet its mission of saving lives and protecting property. Some people in the fire and EMS field believe that community risk reduction is trying to put them out of business. However, that is simply a myth; a fire department will always exist, but we can keep ourselves and our communities safer by the things we do through community risk reduction.

5 Can you tell us about the “Community Risk Reduction In Action” feature you created for the book?

We created this feature for relevant chapters so that the reader could see real-world examples of community risk reduction and what other communities are doing to mitigate risk. I consulted with friends and colleagues in the field and pulled some information from them, along with cases I read about, to create these features. I tried to find a collection of communities of different sizes and types that have community risk reduction cases worth studying. I think the “Community Risk Reduction In Action” pieces will help the reader relate to the book and show that community risk reduction isn’t just theoretical; it’s happening in real communities in America today.

6 Appendices B, C, and D seem to have immediate applications for the end user. How did that come about?

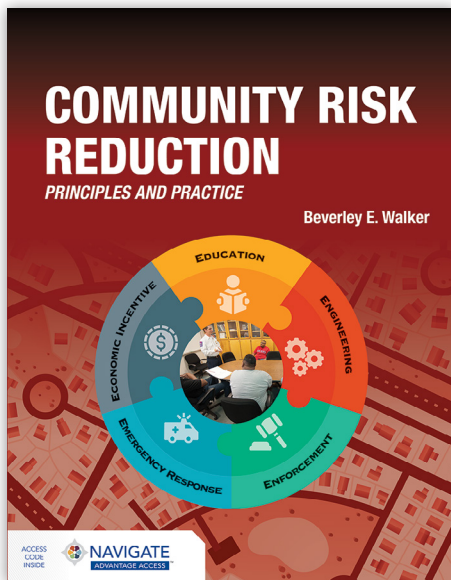
Appendix B shows an actual community risk reduction plan developed and implemented by an entire jurisdictional-type community’s fire department. Appendix C is another real community risk reduction plan, but it’s from a station response area. This one is a much smaller and simpler plan

since it’s based on a smaller territory. While community risk reduction plans don’t have an exact format that needs to be followed, it’s important for students to see a real-world example of what the book talks about. Appendices B and C should help with that.

Appendix D is a simple community risk reduction checklist and job aid that helps the user get started on their plan. It’s meant to make the initial planning and “brainstorming” for community risk reduction easier.

7 How does the book help fire and emergency service departments analyze and recognize their role in community risk reduction?

The book helps organizations understand that community risk reduction is their role; it’s not something that another community organization can do. Other organizations can help, but it’s up to fire and EMS organizations to help the community understand and implement the community risk reduction plan, given that many community members don’t understand the risks and hazards like a fire and EMS organization does. Through community risk reduction, fire and EMS departments can move one step closer to meeting their mission to best protect their community.



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Beverley Walker

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For more information on Beverley’s book, please visit <http://go.psglearning.com/crr/> or contact your **Public Safety Group representative** by visiting <http://go.psglearning.com/findarep>