

**U.S. Department of  
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*Smart Practices*

*Spotlight*

**April 9, 2003**

**FIRE Educators: Helping Schools Become Better Prepared**  
Hoover, Alabama Fire Department

*Summary: Increasingly state and local personnel are recognizing the need to work together to help protect their communities. This week's Spotlight focuses on how a local fire department established a program that provides a way to better connect the town's fire department, police department and school system.*

When the Hoover, Ala., Fire Department decided it was time for a better working relationship with the local school system, it developed a program that involved designating a Fire Information Resource Educator (F.I.R.E.) for every school in the community.

Essentially, the fire department was seeking to expand an already successful Police School Resource Officer Program at the city's nine elementary schools, three middle schools and two high schools. To centralize and improve connections with the schools and to identify new ways to serve the more than 10,000 students and faculty members within the school system, the department recruited volunteers from within its ranks to serve as F.I.R.E. educators and principal points of contact for each of the schools.

Having a F.I.R.E. educator certified as a First Aid/CPR Instructor and responsible for safety and fire code issues at each of the schools has led to a number of useful initiatives, for example:

- F.I.R.E. educators serve as a critical conduit between school nurses and the paramedics at each fire station and they are involved in fire prevention education and coordination at their respective schools.
- They have provided fire extinguisher training to the schools' nutritionists, kitchen workers and custodians, and helped establish the school system's crisis counseling response network.
- F.I.R.E. educators have provided system-wide training to school administrators in areas such as disaster response and local school mitigation, emergency plan development and implementation, and the Incident Management System (IMS). In fact, this relationship has led to the official adoption of IMS as the school system's crisis management model.

A mobile command unit for the city was a significant result of the partnership between the Hoover Fire Department and the school. A surplus vehicle from the Hoover City Schools and the remodeling efforts of Hoover firefighters and fleet management personnel exemplified this partnership.

Other benefits of this relationship include enhanced communications among all the participants, improved integration of city and school system emergency response plans, and a reduction in the number of safety violations identified during fire inspections of the school campuses.

To submit a 'Smart Practice' for consideration or subscribe to Smart Practices Spotlight send an e-mail to [SmartPractices@fema.gov](mailto:SmartPractices@fema.gov)

*Smart Practices Spotlight highlights practices and ideas that members of the emergency management and responder community have found useful and effective; they are not necessarily advocated or endorsed by FEMA. For more information about this initiative, contact Capt.. Allan Rice, Hoover Fire Station 2, at [ricea@ci.hoover.al.us](mailto:ricea@ci.hoover.al.us).*