

FIRE SAFETY ISSUE
May 1990

Primary responsibility: Karen Fernicola

Overview

The hearing on federal "fire-safe" cigarette legislation was the centerpiece of an eventful May. Industry discussions with Rep. Moakley continued throughout the month.

Meanwhile, the business of The Institute's Fire Safety Education Program continued unabated. We worked on fulfilling pending grant requests and made several appearances at fire service organization meetings to communicate the industry's commitment to cigarette fire safety and to public fire safety education.

Highlights

A hearing was held May 16 on "fire-safe" cigarette bills in the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Competitiveness. Bill sponsors Joe Moakley (D-MA), Rick Boucher (D-VA) and Tom Bliley (R-VA) expressed a willingness to work together toward the common goal of cigarette fire safety. Moakley noted the industry's cooperation with him over the past several months, but stressed his desire to require the production of "fire-safe" cigarettes as soon as possible.

While TI witnesses emphasized the industry's commitment to cigarette fire safety and to public education, Subcommittee Chairman Doug Walgren (D-PA) doubted that the industry was doing all it could to address the careless smoking fire problem and requested follow-up information on the industry's research efforts since 1984. In response to questioning, Moakley assured Walgren that he was convinced of the industry's sincerity in working toward cigarette fire safety.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology and the Consumer Product Safety Commission both testified that the time limits expressed in the Moakley bill were not feasible.

Of four fire groups that testified, two -- The National Volunteer Fire Council and the Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York -- expressed support for the Boucher bill. The International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters and the National Association of State Fire Marshals submitted statements for the record endorsing the Boucher bill.

For Public Affairs staff, the weeks leading up to the hearing were consumed in final preparations, including briefings to congressional staff members and witnesses. In the weeks after

the hearing, we will assist in responding to follow-up requests for information where appropriate.

TI staff gave a presentation on The Institute's Fire Safety Education Program at the annual meeting of the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs, a section of the International Association of Fire Chiefs. Institute staff and consultants also attended the annual conference of the National Fire Protection Association and the Fire and Burn Educators Conference, sponsored by the International Association of Fire Service Instructors.

Among the fire safety education grants awarded in May were those to the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance, the Fellowship of Fire Chaplains, the International Society of Fire Service Instructors, the Racine (Wisconsin) Fire Department and the Eden Prairie (Minnesota) Safety Camp. The International Society of Black Professional Fire Fighters received a grant of used office chairs from The Institute.

Because departments that are averse to receiving Tobacco Institute grants usually do not apply for them, Institute grants are rarely "turned down." Though it is uncommon, sometimes a community's political interests override a fire department's request for funding after a grant has been awarded. In May, the Colorado Springs (Colorado) Fire Department declined a grant for audio-visual equipment as "an unfortunate result of the current controversy surrounding the tobacco industry and its products."

We made progress in fulfilling backlogged requests for free public fire education materials this month. All requests received during April were processed in May.

Minutes from the April 20 National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) Foundation board of directors meeting were completed and sent. The Foundation will be awarding a grant to the American Critical Incident Stress Foundation to help establish a critical incident stress debriefing team hotline and network.

A draft of the 1991 plan continued to undergo revision and refinement during May. The fire safety issue budget for 1990 will be evaluated to determine how costs can be cut while achieving maximum value for the money spent during the remainder of the year.

Next Month's Goals

Develop budget plan to save money by end of year.

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Work with NVFC Foundation directors to follow up on grant to
American Critical Incident Stress Foundation.

Catch up on all grant requests and correspondence.

Begin review and production on TriData's "Proving Public Fire
Education Works" report.