



## **SOUND OFF WITH THE HOME FIRE SAFETY PATROL**

### **A fire safety program for students and families**

### **Background Information for Educators**

Each year in the United States, almost 3,000 people die in home fires. Thousands more are injured. Research shows that having working smoke alarms can cut the risk of dying in a fire almost in half, but far too many people in our country lack this basic level of protection, especially the very young and very old, and people of low income. Research also supports the importance of education to children and their families about fire safety in the home and of practicing fire drills.

*Sound Off with the Home Fire Safety Patrol* is a creative, fun, home fire safety education program created for 2nd and 3rd graders by the Center for National Prevention Initiatives of the Michigan Public Health Institute and its curriculum partner Young Minds Inspired (YMI). The program includes a Storybook and Poster, Activity Sheets with homework instructions, Videos, online games, and much more. You can use Sound Off during Fire Prevention Week in October or at any time during the school year.

#### **Background**

*Sound Off with the Home Fire Safety Patrol* was developed, implemented, and evaluated by national fire safety experts through a series of Fire Prevention & Safety Grants from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security/FEMA.

The goal is to change fire safety behaviors of young children (Grades 2 and 3) and their families by teaching them how to prevent and respond to home fires. We do this through a unique combination of classroom lessons using proven teaching tools, Home Safety Visits by local fire departments and, where available, free smoke alarm installations in students' homes.

The following story illustrates Sound Off in action:

*In 2023, a Sound Off Fire Department team from Ohio visited 7-year-old Ronan's class, taught a lesson on the importance of smoke alarms and the sounds they make, and assigned the students homework: to count and test the alarms in their homes with a grown-up, record the information on an activity sheet, and return it to their teacher to share with firefighters. That night, Ronan **INSISTED** his mother Julia help with the homework. The result? They found not one working smoke alarm in the home! Local Sound Off firefighters scheduled a Home Safety Visit, installed free smoke alarms, and watched Ronan's family do a fire drill. **Just 11 days later**, Julia and her baby daughter were napping one afternoon when the smoke alarms sounded. They escaped and called 911. The Fire Department was able to contain the fire to the room of origin. Ronan received a special certificate from the Fire Marshal's Office at a school assembly.*

The core components of this free program include four Lessons, reproducible student Activity Sheets, Videos, and a Storybook (all in English and Spanish), along with an interactive online game and smartphone App to engage families. In addition, Sound Off Online, the program's digital platform, enables teachers and firefighters to access Sound Off materials, manage the program, communicate with each other, and track progress.

**Proven Results**

Sound Off works. Analysis of quizzes administered before and after Sound Off lessons shows significant fire safety knowledge gain by participating students. In the most recent year, student knowledge improved 48%. In addition, Sound Off has led to installation of almost 80,000 smoke alarms since the program launched in 2014, leading to lives saved: 17 of those saves are directly traced to the Sound Off program!

**Life-Saving Lessons**

We believe teachers are key to helping students and families stay safe from home fires. Firefighters can't do it alone. Sound Off methods and materials reflect international best practice for teaching fire safety to young children.

## **Overview of Sound Off with the Home Fire Safety Patrol**

### **Target Audience**

Students in Grades 2 and 3 and their families

### **Program Objectives**

- To educate children and their families about smoke alarms, including the sounds they make and the need for monthly testing, how to prevent home fires, and how to conduct home fire drills
- To foster a community approach to fire safety by forging partnerships among students, families, educators, firefighters, life safety educators, and community partners
- To identify families who do not have enough working smoke alarms in their homes and connect them with local firefighters and other safety partners

### **Program Components**

- Four classroom lessons with reproducible student/family Activity Sheets
- A poster for display in the classroom
- The Sound Off Storybook
- Four animated Videos (to accompany the Lessons)
- An interactive online game (can be used on a whiteboard or computer to reinforce messages)
- A free smartphone App which includes the Sound Off Videos, Storybook, and safety games for family engagement
- Sound Off Online platform

### **Alignment with Common Core Standards**

The four Sound Off lessons align with Grades 2 and 3 Common Core State Standards in Language Arts, including Reading Informational Text and Speaking and Listening, as well as National Health Education Standards.

### **How does the Sound Off program work?**

Local fire department teams work with 2nd and 3rd Grade teachers in their community to present the four Sound Off Lessons in the classroom. Participating teachers can access all components of the program and connect with local firefighters through the Sound Off Online platform ([sound-off-online.com](http://sound-off-online.com)).

Sound Off Lessons teach students about:

1. Smoke Alarms – what they do, what they sound like, where they belong, and why they are important. As homework, students and a parent/caregiver count and test the smoke alarms in their homes and report their findings back to class.
2. Home Fire Dangers – how to identify the six most common home fire dangers and how a grown-up should fix them
3. Home Fire Escape Maps – why it is important to know two ways out of every room in a home and to have an outside meeting place
4. Home Fire Drills – families learn how to conduct a home fire drill and why it is important to practice home fire drills twice a year. Families who conduct a home fire drill are

encouraged to report on their experience with a form on the Activity Sheet that their child brings back to school.

A local firefighter may present these lessons over three classroom visits and then visit again at the end of the program to review what the students have learned and congratulate them on the steps they have taken to be safer from a home fire.

Local firefighters may also ask teachers to distribute a letter inviting parents/caregivers to request a Home Safety Visit from their local fire department during which firefighters will install **free smoke alarms** (as needed and while supplies last) and review the family's home fire safety plans. Families accept this invitation by filling in parent/caregiver contact information on the letter and having their child bring it back to school. The local fire department collects the letters and works directly with families to schedule and conduct the visits.

### **Thank You**

Thank you for considering this exciting opportunity to work with your local fire department and other safety advocates in your community to help protect your students and their families from fire. Fire safety experts agree, the single most important step people can take is to install and maintain working smoke alarms. It is not always easy to know who is at risk because their smoke alarms are missing or not working. Your school can help us find families in need. Together, we can save lives.

### **Participating States**

States include: Alabama, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and the District of Columbia.