

How is Your Public Image?

CLARENCE "SMILEY" WHITE
[MFRI Field Instructo](#)

Instructor Guide

Session Reference: 1

Topic: How is Your Public Image?

Level of Instruction:


Time Required: Two Hours

Materials:

- Audio-visual equipment to project any visuals
- Examples of fire and rescue publicity

References:

- Essentials of Fire Fighting, 4th Edition, IFSTA
- Emergency Care, 8th Edition, Brady



Drill of the Month
presented by
the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute
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Preparation

Motivation:

Objective (SPO) 1-1:

The student will demonstrate a better understanding of the importance of maintaining a good public image, actions that can impact on that image, and the benefits that can be derived from a good image.

Overview:

How is your public image?

- Emergency Operations
- Non-Emergency Activities
- Benefits

Session 1

How is Your Public Image?

SPO 1- The student will demonstrate a better understanding of
1 the importance of maintaining a good public image, actions that can impact on that image, and the benefits that can be derived from a good image.

EO 1-1 Identify those emergency situations where a good public image may not be maintained.

EO 1-2 Identify those non-emergency situations where a good public image may not be maintained.

EO 1-3 Identify the benefits to the individual and the department from a good public image.

Instructional Guide

This drill should be an interactive discussion rather than a lecture. The group leader should encourage participants to share personal observations or experiences related to public image. Local news reports may also be beneficial to support the discussion. Caution should be exercised to avoid personalizing the discussion and offending an individual or organization.

1. EMERGENCY OPERATIONS (1-1)

1. Personal Appearance
 1. Properly attired for the emergency
 1. Wearing personal protective clothing appropriate for the emergency
 2. Using universal precautions for medical emergencies
 3. Wearing clothing that identifies wearer as part of the organization
 2. Presentable attire
 1. Clean and neat
 2. Proper fit
 3. Worn properly
 4. Worn as a complete set
 5. Not wearing offensive clothing
 6. Not wearing clothing that is in need of repair
2. Equipment Maintenance and Operational Readiness
 1. Equipment and apparatus cleanliness
 1. Shows pride and care
 2. Shows proper maintenance
 3. Reflection on department
 4. Shows preservation of taxpayer or donor investment
 2. Readiness
 1. Equipment starts when needed
 2. Batteries charged and ready for use
 3. Supplies restocked after previous alarm

4. Equipment stored for easy access
 5. Equipment and supplies neatly stored
 3. Professional delivery of service
 1. Conduct on scene
 1. Tone of voice
 2. Calm and clear speech and actions
 3. Knowledge in operation and use of equipment
 2. Service delivery
 1. Thoroughness of service delivery
 2. Concern for customer - citizen
 3. Actions organized and planned
 4. Concern for safety of everyone
 5. Take the opportunity to explain what is being done and why
 4. Remarks or actions
 1. Incomplete communications or unwillingness to communicate with customer
 2. Inappropriate remarks with team members
 3. Use of inappropriate or offensive language
 4. Loud or excited tone of voice
 5. Less than calm manner or actions
 6. Thinking before speaking and making inappropriate or inaccurate statements
 7. Listening before speaking and not being responsive to what has been said
 5. Manner of dealing with helpers and bystanders
 1. Don't criticize what has already been done
 2. Utilize on-scene helpers when and where possible - they want to help so be careful turning them away
 3. Show appreciation for assistance provided
 4. Bystanders and helpers may be more qualified than service providers
 5. You never know who is watching or helping
 6. Bedside manner
 1. Patient
 1. Treat them as you would like to be treated
 2. Provide factual information if you can but be careful when discussing patient condition or diagnosing conditions
 3. Keep opinions to yourself
 4. Deal with the emergency and not what happened or who is at fault
 5. Be honest and sincere with the customer
 6. If you do not know, say so
 7. Do not operate outside your level of training
 8. Do not cause undue concern with customers
 9. Communicate in lay persons terms
 10. Share what is being done and why
 11. Reassure patient
 2. Treatment of relatives and friends
 1. Provide factual information
 2. Keep opinions to yourself
 3. Be honest and sincere with the customer
 4. If you do not know, say so
 5. Share what you can about what has been done and why without violating patient confidentiality
 7. Attitude
 1. Present a positive and professional attitude
 2. Work as a team and support each other
 3. Do not become complacent
 4. Be safety conscious
- 2. NON-EMERGENCY ACTIVITIES (1-2)**

1. Station visitors
 1. Be courteous
 2. Welcome them with pride
 3. Show you care and want to help
 4. If you agree to do something, do it, and don't make commitments that you have no intention of honoring
 5. If you are unable to assist, seek someone who can
 6. Avoid any prejudicial treatment of anyone or group
2. Service calls
 1. Present a positive image rather than lack of concern or interest
 2. Calls offer a great opportunity to work with the customer in a non-emergency environment
 3. Good for public relations
3. Fire safety inspections
 1. Good opportunity to promote fire safety and serve the public
 2. Should be positive and helpful for the customer
 3. Do not be critical of living conditions or housekeeping practices
4. Pre-incident planning
 1. Opportunity to meet the customer in a non-emergency environment
 2. Beneficial to the department and the customer
 3. Establish a relationship with the customer
5. Off-duty activities
 1. Be careful, you never know who is watching
 1. Clothing or insignias
 2. Markings on vehicles
 3. Affiliation known in smaller communities or local neighborhoods
 2. Should not be doing anything that you would not do in front of a customer
 3. If you are off duty, do not wear anything is representative of your organization and may embarrass you or the organization
 4. Separate being on-duty and off-duty, especially when consuming alcoholic beverages
 5. Remember, you are a reflection of your organization
6. Public fire safety education
 1. Good opportunity to interact with public
 2. Should be positive and helpful for the customer
 3. Do not be critical of the lack of attention or participation
 4. Work at the level of the audience but avoid putting them down
7. Telephone courtesy
 1. Answer the phone in a professional and courteous manner
 1. Identify yourself
 2. Identify your organization
 3. Listen to the caller
 2. Take messages and make sure they are delivered
 3. Deal with urgent messages immediately
 4. Provide only information for public release
 1. No home telephone numbers
 2. No home addresses
 3. No pager numbers
 4. No information about an incident or personnel
 5. Contact appropriate officials for media inquiries
8. Returning from alarms
 1. Be professional in appearance and actions
 2. Avoid discussion of incidents outside the department
 3. Be careful with remarks related to an incident
9. Training
 1. Be professional in your conduct at training
 2. Show that you take it seriously - avoid horseplay

3. Avoid damage to personal or real property
4. Seek permission when using property of others
5. Take advantage of the opportunity to educate others on what is taking place
10. Stand bys
 1. Dress to reflect your organization
 2. Display proper conduct
 3. Take advantage of the opportunity to interact with the public
11. Fiscal responsibility
 1. Making financial decisions wisely
 2. Think of the people that support you and how they might perceive your actions when making financial decisions
 3. Use the bid process to get the best value for the department and the taxpayers/donors
 4. Try not to be excessive in your spending - it may cause people to stop supporting you
12. Corporate responsibility
 1. Treat members fairly so that they do not criticize you in front of others
 2. Keep good records of business transactions to show accountability and responsibility
 3. Show good judgment in making decisions
 4. Try to be a good citizen and responsible part of the community
 5. Be open and up front in your corporate affairs
 6. Use good management practices in the operation of your department
 7. Don't be afraid to be accountable and responsible for your actions
3. **BENEFITS (1-3)**
 1. Better understanding and appreciation of emergency services
 2. Better community support with fund raising and other activities
 3. Better able to compete with other public agencies for tax funding
 4. Maintenance of public trust and confidence
 5. Maintenance of positive public image
 6. Appearance of professionalism in service delivery
 7. Maintenance of respect of community
 8. Demonstration of productivity by being out in public in a non-emergency environment
 1. Stand bys
 2. Public fire safety education programs
 3. Fire safety inspections
 4. Open houses
 5. Participation in community events
 9. Survival of the organization
 10. Avoidance of negative public reaction
 1. Stereotyping of members because of actions of a few
 2. Bad reputation because of poor quality service
 3. May not call or want service from a particular department
 4. Adversarial relationship with public or governmental agencies
 5. Remember that people share bad experiences with many and good experiences with few

Summary

Review:

How is your public image?

- Emergency Operations
- Non-Emergency Activities

- Benefits

Remotivation:

Public image is something that many people in the fire and rescue assume or take for granted. They are looked upon as the good guys and gals who come to help when needed. Negative actions or publicity can tarnish that image very quickly. Inappropriate actions by a few can be perceived as how the entire organization acts.