**Considerations for creating a firefighter camp for women**

|  |
| --- |
| 1. **Have a vision.**
 |
| * Determine program suitable for your department (e.g., station tours, visiting communications centre, trying out gear, training program culminating in live fire evolution.
 |  |
| * Determine suitable participants (e.g., Age group or demographic groups)
 |  |
| * Determine length and format of program (e.g., one-day introductory program or week-long course?)
 |  |
| * Determine if there are possible partnership with other emergency services to share planning and resources.
 |  |
| 1. **Build a team.**
 |  |
| * Obtain early support from leadership.
 |  |
| * Invite probational firefighters and those newer (e.g., within three years) to the department to the planning process encouraging them to become active role models and leaders.
 |  |
| * Consider recruiting pre-service firefighters as volunteers, as they can serve as junior platoon leaders, equipment runners, and instructional assistants during the camps.
 |  |
| * Encourage skill development by recruiting those in teaching or transitioning into training officer positions to build lesson and safety plans for the camp.
 |  |
| 1. **Offer Realistic and Challenging Evolutions.**
 |  |
| * Prepare to be surprised by the courage and risk-taking that young participants will take.
 |  |
| * Give participants every opportunity to try, see, and feel tools by making everything hands-on.
 |  |
| * Understand the importance of participants being exposed to mentors who are just like them – lifting and using the equipment – so they know they can do the same.
 |  |
| * Limit the use of guest speakers, as past programs have shown that participants learn best when given the opportunity to learn directly from instructors during one-on-one or small group activities.
 |  |
| 1. **Create Partnerships**
 |  |
| * Have you sought funding assistance or sponsorship opportunities?
 |  |
| * Have you sought or engaged with local businesses who may be willing to support your program through the donation of items such as meals, T-shirts, chair rentals, water bottles, and bunker gear?
 |  |
| * Have you sought assistance from fire equipment suppliers and trainers who may be willing to donate their time to teach participants how to use their tools?
 |  |
| * Have you sought assistance from community organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs, Girl Guides, groups who support young women in the trades, and school boards?
 |  |
| * Have you sought partnerships with other municipal departments (such as recreation) to make camp a reality?
 |  |
| * Have you involved your local firefighter association or union as they likely have deep connections to community organizations and local businesses?
* Have you acknowledged all partnerships on your flyers, publications, and emails about the program?
 |  |
| * Have you reached out to Fire Service Women of Ontario as a resource to support your program and connect you with people and resources to make your camp successful?
 |  |
| 1. **Remove Financial Barriers to Participation.**
 |  |
| * Have you considered the financial costs of the program?
 |  |
| * Consider offering food and transportation to participants and volunteers as well.
 |  |
| * If your department lacks appropriately sized bunker gear, consider borrowing from one of the college pre-service programs, as well as accepting used safety boots and gloves that you can reuse in future programs.
 |  |
| 1. **Be Honest.**
 |  |
| * Build trust with participants.
 |  |
| * Answer any questions truthfully about the training evolutions and be open to talk about anything.
 |  |
| * Be transparent with participants about the harsh realities of the job, including the experiences of physical, emotional, and mental health as well as harassment that many women often encounter.
 |  |
| 1. **Safety Considerations. Safety must be your number one priority.**
 |  |
| * Gather relevant medical history of participants and brief all volunteers with health risk information.
 |  |
| * Brief all participants in the same manner any firefighter would be briefed regarding fireground safety precautions.
 |  |
| * Use the duration of your program to appropriately pace and safely build your evolutions according to the skill development of your participants.
 |  |
| * Assign a safety officer for the camp and have a complete medical response kit on hand.
 |  |
| 1. **Get your Messaging Right in the Media.**
 |  |
| * Plan to utilize media as it is an important tool extending the value of your camp beyond the actual day of programming.
 |  |
| * Plan to invite local media to cover elements of the program, as this feel-good story and the value of images of capable women firefighters and their supportive male colleagues is immeasurable.
 |  |
| * Have you worked with the larger corporation communications division to ensure your messaging aligns with corporate policy?
 |  |
| * Have a dedicated photographer on hand so that the participants can focus on safe training and not be distracted by their phones.
 |  |
| * The fire department may be challenged with the ever-changing world of social media communications, but recognize that your target demographic are experts on social media - so use these young people’s expertise.
 |  |
| * Provide opportunities for this target demographic to help you create visual content that will connect your fire department with their peers and the public at large.
 |  |
| 1. **Mentoring Doesn’t End at the Close of Camp.**
 |  |
| * Have you set up a program to continue mentorships for young women after the camp, and to remain connected?
 |  |
| * Will your program offer continuing education bursaries or additional mentorship opportunities for young women interested in becoming firefighters?
 |  |
| * Have you set up opportunities for attendees to continue receiving leadership and real-life networking after the camp is complete?
 |  |
| 1. **Measure your Success.**
 |  |
| * Have you established a mechanism to consider the short- and long-term impacts of your program?
 |  |
| * Have you prepared short evaluations that participants and volunteers can complete on the final day of programming to shape future initiatives?
 |  |
| * Have you prepared a questionnaire that can examine how many participants return to their communities as volunteer or career firefighters, or in other emergency service roles?
 |  |
| * Conduct follow up surveys with camp participants within the 1st, 3rd, 5th and even 10th year to assess program impact.
 |  |
| * *List other benefits here*
 |  |
| * *List other benefits here*
 |  |
| * *List other benefits here*
 |  |
| *COMMENTS: Use this space to include any findings or additional information to assist with developing a camp for young women firefighters.* |