



City of New Bedford  
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## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### **New Bedford Fire Department Awarded Two Fire Safety Education Grants Aimed at Youth and Seniors**

**New Bedford, Massachusetts** – The Massachusetts Department of Fire has awarded two fire safety education grants to the New Bedford Fire Department.

The Student Awareness Fire Education (S.A.F.E.) program grant was awarded to New Bedford to help educate kindergarten and third grade students attending New Bedford Public Schools. Since the S.A.F.E. program was implemented statewide in 1995, fire fatalities in persons under the age of 18 have dropped by 72%.

Fire safety education has a long history in New Bedford. In fact, the statewide program was modeled after a successful program launched in the early 1990's by New Bedford firefighters to bring fire and life safety education into New Bedford Public Schools. Over the years, there have been many real life examples that have underscored the importance of fire safety education for school children. In 2014, two New Bedford students received the *Massachusetts Young Hero* award for putting into practice the life saving knowledge and skills they learned from specially trained New Bedford firefighters.

"We are very pleased that the invaluable fire safety education provided by the New Bedford Fire Department to our students will continue," said Superintendent Dr. Pia Durkin. "It's important that our children are prepared for all situations, and time and again this education has proved to be the key to that preparation."

A second grant awarded to New Bedford Fire Department is aimed at connecting with the city's senior citizen population. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 20% of the population in New Bedford is over the age of 65. This is the second year New Bedford has received this grant award. Through community partnerships and presentations at senior centers and various senior living facilities, New Bedford firefighters are working to make the SENIOR S.A.F.E. program as successful as its youth counterpart.

"The Council on Aging is so grateful for the funds that have been awarded again," said Director Debra Lee. "These educational programs have been instrumental in not only educating our seniors, but in keeping them safe as well."

“The New Bedford Fire Department is excited to continue with these fundamental programs at New Bedford Public Schools and the Council on Aging. We are very committed to fire prevention education and our trained firefighters truly enjoy working closely with both groups,” Chief Michael Gomes said.

For information as how your community organization can benefit from these programs or other fire safety education topics, please email Captain Brian J. Arruda at [barruda@newbedford-ma.gov](mailto:barruda@newbedford-ma.gov).

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