Speaker 1:	Welcome to CRR Radio from the Vision 2020 Project.
Ed Comeau:	Well, welcome to CRR Radio. My name is Ed Comeau with the Vision 2020 Project. Today is going to be the first part of a two part series we're doing focusing on what our guests are referring to as the side effects of CRR. Joe, could you take a second here, and introduce yourself and give us a little bit of your background?
Joe Powers :	Yeah. Hi everybody. My name is Joe Powers. I come from Henrico County, Virginia. I've got 19 years of career experience with Henrico County. We're about a 600 person department, we've got 21 stations and we're located in the center of Virginia right here in central Virginia, right outside of Richmond.
	Over the years I've had a lot of opportunities within my career to work in a bunch of different areas, fire prevention, fire inspections, fire investigations. Did a lot of work with strategic planning and program development, and even fire accreditation.
Ed Comeau:	I came across essentially a presentation that Joe is doing, looking at the side effects of CRR and we talked about it quite a bit more. So what we're going to be doing in this two part series is, part one is going to be about the internal effects of CRR. And then part two would be the external effects of CRR. So let's start with the internal effects of it, Joe. Fire service is very traditional, and CRR is something that is newer to them. So what kind of effect is it having on the tradition of the fire service?
Joe Powers :	The fire service has traditionally been very reactive to our environment. Over the years, we've developed many successful programs that were reacting to the world around us, like stop, drop and roll. We implemented programs like after the fire canvassing for smoke alarms, and smoke detectors, and community education. We also had the fire prevention week in October that we always push out a large program into our community.
	But a lot of these programs were all one size fits all programs. They were a blanket program that covered most of the community, and it didn't really address the risk that was being identified within our jurisdiction. Community risk reduction is really more than just code enforcement or public education. CRR is generally not specifically fire prevention, it's more of the organization's global approach to reducing risk in the community. So it may be fire prevention in some communities or in some neighborhoods, but it may be fall prevention, drowning prevention, cooking fires in apartment complexes, and it all depends on the information that we're able to pull out of our various data sources to identify that risk.
	It really gets us into the weeds of what our community needs and what our community expects of the services that that we can provide them. Because once

we understand the community, then we need to start understanding the population within that same community. And then we can get even deeper and understand the specific characteristics or the specific behaviors of those people in those communities. Because, like we all know, every community is a little bit different. When we look at risk based service models, we're able to create, develop programs that meet this community's needs by matching the risk that's evident in that community.

Ed Comeau: And I'll bet if you walk into any one of your stations, you ask the firefighters, what's the risk in your first do, they can probably tell you intuitively what it is. But also at the same time isn't data really important with kind of quantifying that and probably data sometimes might be opposite of what the firefighters think is the highest risk.

Joe Powers :   Yeah, absolutely. Historical data based on calls, based on infers injuries and even based on some of the data that if we think outside of the box and start looking at real estate data, social service or mental health data, all the information that we can create, we can obtain through partnerships, that a lot of times will paint a very different picture from what we perceive because it's not always what we perceive as the risk. And a lot of times that comes down to the actual data within the models.

Ed Comeau: And it may be the sort of situation where if they've run on six cooking fires in the past few shifts, all of a sudden that seems like okay, that's the real problem. But that could be just a blip.

Joe Powers :   Yeah, absolutely. And it could only be A shift running those cooking fires and B and C shift are experiencing a fundamentally different risk within the community.

Ed Comeau: So what are some of the examples you've seen of trying to match the community risk with the resources that are available?

Joe Powers :   So I've had the opportunity to travel across the United States in varying roles. And I've seen some really neat programs that have addressed the very specific risks that the jurisdictions have identified. Like spring river safety programs for where they deploy water rescue resources into the community during springtime when people are starting to occupy the rivers and to try to change their behavior to decrease the prevalence of drownings. Weekend after school pool safety programs in subsidized housing, I've seen that have had success and shows positive outcomes. And even community specific school education programs rather than deploying a fourth grade education program to the entire school district, we have the opportunity, if we understand the community's risk and the neighborhood risk, of deploying a program that's specific to the students at that school in the community that they live in.

Ed Comeau: Okay. So on a number of these things, funding's always an issue on the fire department. What do you do if you've perceive a risk in your community, but it's not something you necessarily have in your budget?

Joe Powers :   Yeah, that's a really good question. We can take the stove top fire stops as an example. When you look at the cost to rebuild a kitchen in an apartment complex and the cost to relocate the occupants and the effect of the apartment and even maybe the apartment below from water damage. When we identify the cost of the replacement and we identify the cost of the community risk reduction activity, a lot of times the cost justifies the expense.

Ed Comeau: And so this kind of gets back to what you were talking about earlier too, that not only is data important, but also it's not necessarily one size fits all situation. You have to look at the unique characteristics of your risk and your community.

Joe Powers :   Yeah, absolutely.

Ed Comeau: Yeah. Okay. So you know, when you're implementing CRR in a fire department, there are certainly always challenges and hurdles to overcome internally when you're trying to do it. So what are some of the selling points that you can use to convince a fire department that CRR is worth doing?

Joe Powers :   There are a number of benefits to community risk reduction within the fire service and the fire service as a whole, a lot of times has a misconception of what community risk reduction is. They think that a lot of times community risk reduction will increase the workload of an organization and we just frankly don't have the time for it. But when we get away from a one size fits all program and we start to tailor these programs to the community, we're able to start reducing the waste within our activities and start to actually match the needs of our community.

We're able to start to create a little bit of buy in from our frontline staff because the increase in efficiency. When we have the ability to put our staff into neighborhoods that are at risk that we've identified and our staff can start to see the difference that they're making then they take a little bit of ownership in those activities and they're willing to do it more so than they have in the past. And we're able to also have that focused government work, which frankly our elected officials love to see that we're increasing our efficiency of work and we're starting to show a little bit of decrease in workload.

Ed Comeau: And I think that's the big trade off, too is because you have decreased number of calls, you're not running out the door all the time to cooking fires or whatever. That translates directly to firefighter safety, doesn't it?

Joe Powers :   Yeah, absolutely. And it doesn't always just happen with reducing call load either. If we take the example of let's say a smoke alarm program, because

everybody has some sort of a smoke alarm program that they've either deployed or tried to deploy. But when we use the right amount of data and we create the right partnerships, fire departments are able to identify homes within their community that are most likely not to have a working smoke alarm.

So a good example is the Henrico smoke alarm initiative. And notice I didn't say Henrico Fire smoke alarm initiative because it's not ours. It's actually the county's smoke alarm initiative because it was developed through many of these partnerships. We were able to identify with 91% accuracy, which homes in our community did not have a working smoke alarm.

And instead of deploying resources to an entire city block or entire neighborhood within the county, we're able to go out and knock on very specific doors and put in smoke alarms at a very efficient, in a very efficient manner. And when you do that, you realize that maybe we don't need to push fire apparatus with on-duty personnel into these neighborhoods all the time. Why don't we start using light duty staff and a vehicle that we were able to get from our county shop to start knocking on doors, putting smoke alarms in. And that's what we were able to do. And in under a year's time, we put in a thousand smoke alarms that fortunately we didn't pay for it because we were able to show what we were doing to our community, solicit donations from folks like the American Red Cross and the Henrico Firefighter Foundation to fund the activities that we're doing. And we did it all without using, you know, suppression personnel.

Ed Comeau:
Now you had a few things here that I'd like to kind of drill down a little bit deeper. First of all, the key word I think is partnerships. A lot of fire departments are realizing or have come to realize, they can't do it by themselves, can they?

Joe Powers :
No, no, not at all. Two of the biggest champions of our smoke alarm program were social services and mental health. And I really wanted to jump on their data to really truly understand the need in our community. But of course we ran into legal hurdles with social service and mental health data. But what we were able to do was create partnerships with social services, mental health, our county's GIS, the police department, the sheriff's department, public works and finance to really understand what data's available. And then allow those people to take part in the solution and create a risk assessment that identified our homes that needed smoke alarms.

You take it a step further and you realize that many of these partnerships are going to be used more and more with risks that we identify in the future. And we can go back to our folks in the sheriff's department to help us implement programs and to go back to social services and mental health to help understand the demographic because community risk reduction activities don't all have to be deployed by fire department personnel. A lot of times, we can help them identify the risk and then through partnerships we can actually find

the right agency to deploy the programs to the community rather than us doing it all.

Ed Comeau: So actually I think you might've answered the second question or the second thing I wanted to drill down on. You know, you said you had 91% of reliability identifying homes without working smoke alarms. Did the fire department have to do the data crunching on that or were the other agencies that you were working with, did they do that data crunching?

Joe Powers :   Well, we're in a pretty good space when for our agency when it comes to data and we have a true understanding of our own organization's data. So we brought in our data analyst very early in the game to allow her to understand where we needed to go. And she kind of helped guide us to get there. But one of the things that she was able to do was she was able to talk the talk with other departments and other data analysts to find what data is available in other databases and then create those relationships to start sharing that data. Because without the shared data and without data outside of our own records management systems, we're really, we're just working in our own little silos. So three of those partnerships were able to expand and understand what other people have to offer and to consume that information for the betterment of the community.

Ed Comeau: And I know that, as we've been talking about community risk reduction, it's more than just smoke alarms. But smoke alarms can also provide you that entree into a home, can't it, because that's sometimes in a way that's the low hanging fruit, isn't it going in to install smoke alarms. But that gives you a chance to build that relationship, get in the door and potentially identify other problems that may be there, like hoarding or something like that.

Joe Powers :   Yeah, absolutely. And it also gives you an opportunity to walk into somebody's home and provide a message that that neighborhood or that community needs. And not every house that we walk into will get the same message. And maybe those messages are also seasonal. So if we have a tool to provide the folks that are putting in smoke alarms that we can give them this month, this is the topics that we would like you to talk to the community about during the month of January, during the month of July. That gives the opportunity to really match the community's need rather than providing that blanket program to the entire jurisdiction.

Ed Comeau: As we take a break for a moment here, I'd like to let you know about a new campaign that'll be coming out this January. CRR Week. The goal of this campaign is to raise awareness in the fire service about the role and importance of community risk reduction. It is the week of January 20th, kicking off on Martin Luther King Day, which is a day of national community service. You can learn a lot more about it by going to www.crrweek.org or following them on Twitter or Facebook at CRR Week.

And now back to our conversation with Joe Powers. What are some of the other impacts that a CRR has internally on a fire department?

Joe Powers :   Other than increasing efficiency and decreasing the workload, really the other important side effect internally is self-assessment within the organization. We talked a lot about partnerships and we talked lot about sharing of information. And in order to do that successfully, we have to understand ourselves and be able to see the shortcomings that we have as an organization or as an agency. We also have to understand that sometimes the partnerships that we think we have are not all that good if you look from the opposite side.

So when we start understanding our own organization through self-assessment, we understand our own capacity of what we can do and what we can't do. We understand how our resources work well with others, how our deployment model services our communities, and really how those relationships and partnerships work together. We can understand our successes, but more importantly, we really need to understand our challenges so that we can start to build the foundation for the house that sometimes we build before we have the ability to shore it up.

When it comes to the Henrico smoke alarm initiative, we found many partnerships that were adequate, but they weren't super strong where we wanted them to be. So we started to build that foundation. We were able to understand each other more than we ever were before. And we could start to answer some of those questions that we need to do during an organizational self-assessment. Like, hey, what is it that we're doing? And why are we doing it? And a lot of times when we ask why we're doing something, we realize that maybe there's not a real good reason why we're doing it and maybe we should look for an opportunity to improve it. Because once we understand what we're doing, why we're doing it, we assess it to figure out how well we're doing it. We're always going to look for an opportunity to improve it. And through a self-assessment sometimes we realize that we're doing the same thing that our partners are doing and we can join forces and get together.

Ed Comeau: And CRR is a real important part of the accreditation processes, isn't it from CPSC. It's something that they're really looking for and I know in the next edition, it's going to be even a bigger part, isn't it?

Joe Powers :   Yeah, I think so. I think that with the 10th Edition coming out in a couple years, I believe that we will see a industry change toward an integration of community risk reduction into all facets of a fire service organization, which is exactly where it should be. Having community risk reduction as a section, much like fire prevention, is not the true sense of community risk reduction and integration throughout the organization is where community risk reduction really lives.

Ed Comeau:	So I know that recently you were at a meeting down in DC where they rolled out a new concept that starting up in January of next year that will help with this integration you were just talking about?
Joe Powers :	Yeah, so Community Risk Reduction Week or CRR Week is pretty exciting. It's an opportunity for communities and fire departments to get together in a somewhat structured manner with some guidance from the folks that are organizing CRR Week to really provide community engagement. The concept behind CRR Week is that the five days, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of the week are covering the five E's of community risk reduction, which are education, engineering, enforcement, economic incentive and emergency response.
	But as we bring all of those together, you really get that sixth E of engagement with the community on Saturday and Sunday. The departments will have an opportunity to go out and engage with the community with all of the facets that were covered within those previous five days. There's a lot of really good information on crrweek.org. It's a concept that's evolving. It's very dynamic and it's moving forward very quickly. So I encourage you to take a look www.crrweek.org .
Ed Comeau:	And in a few more episodes, we're going to be having some people from CRR Week on here talking about it so we can learn a lot more detail, but I have to absolutely agree with you. It is moving together at lightspeed and it's really, to me, a great program because it's focusing on selling the idea of CRR to the fire service to get them engaged, get them on board and realize the benefits of it. So we're really looking forward to those, having them on a future episode to give us a lot more detail about it.
	Well, we've been talking with Joe Powers, a captain with the Henrico County Division Of Fire, about the internal effects of CRR on a fire department. And in a future episode, we're going to be talking about the external effects of CRR on the community around the fire department. So make sure you watch for that in your feed.
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	Joe, I really appreciate you taking the time to talk with us today and we'll be talking to you again real shortly in a future episode.
Joe Powers :	Thanks for the opportunity.

Ed Comeau: CRR radio is a production of the Vision 2020 Project. It's edited by Rich Palmer and produced by me, Ed Comeau. Thanks for listening and we'll see you next time.

Speaker 1:   Thanks for joining us on CRR radio from the Vision 2020 Project. For more information on community risk reduction, please visit us at www.strategicfire.org.