

LIBRARY REFERENCE ONLY

M.O.T. AND F.O.C. 26
FIRE RESEARCH 11
ORGANIZATION 68
REFERENCE LIBRARY
No. A99FR.N733



Fire Research Note

No. 733

ANALYSIS OF FIRE PREVENTION SLOGANS

by

SHEILA F. NASH

November, 1968

FIRE RESEARCH STATION

Analysis of Fire Prevention Slogans

by

Sheila F. Nash

SUMMARY

An analysis of fire prevention slogans written by the public, and of fire prevention literature produced by local authority fire brigades, indicates that the public are largely unaware of the technical aspects of fire prevention, and that the fire brigades could make useful changes in the balance of subject matter in their fire prevention literature.

KEY WORDS: Brigade, Critical, Education, Fire prevention,
Publicity, Review.

Crown copyright

This report has not been published and should be considered as confidential advance information. No reference should be made to it in any publication without the written consent of the Director of Fire Research.

Analysis of Fire Prevention Slogans

by

Sheila F. Nash

INTRODUCTION

During the 'Make Leicester Fire-safe' campaign in 1967, a competition was organised in which the entrants were required to write an original fire prevention slogan in not more than 12 words. They were also required to mark on a simple drawing of the interior of a room those features which they thought represented fire risks.

Slogans from about half the entries received for the competition have been analysed, and classified according to the concepts of fire and its prevention that each contained.

Fire prevention material produced by fire brigades has been examined in a similar manner. It was hoped to discover from this comparison any marked discrepancies between the concepts of fire prevention that the public hold and those of the fire brigades.

THE COMPETITION AND ITS ENTRANTS

The Central Office of Information prepared a pamphlet, which gave some general fire prevention advice and included the competition. About 87,500 of these pamphlets were distributed in Leicester during the campaign. The competition also appeared in the evening paper "Leicester Mercury", with the result that a total of approximately 1,800 entries were received, of which 700 came from the newspaper, and about 1,100 from the pamphlet.

Competitors who had successfully marked all ten fire risks depicted in the drawing and had written a suitable fire prevention slogan, could win a gas-fired central heating installation worth £225 and "many other valuable prizes".

The 'Make Leicester Fire-safe' campaign started on September 25th 1967, and continued for four weeks. During this period, fire prevention advice was presented to the public in a number of different ways, and this had a marked effect on the slogans written for the competition.

It was found that almost two-thirds of the competitors were female, possibly due to the fact that the main prize offered would appeal particularly to a housewife. The competition was open to anyone except Fire Officers and their families, members of the 'Make Leicester Fire-safe' Committee, and anyone connected with the competition.

METHOD

The slogans from just under 1,000 entries were examined, and classified into twelve main categories, according to the principle concept of fire and its prevention that each slogan contained; for example, the idea of fire being both a friend and an enemy. The slogans were then subdivided within the main category into twelve subsidiary categories using the same twelve headings, for instance, the slogan:

"To prevent a fire, check that wire"

was placed in the main category of 'General fire prevention' and then into the subsidiary category of 'Technical aspects of fire prevention'. Ninety one per cent of the slogans were classified in this way, as shown in Table 1.

The remaining 9 per cent of the slogans fell into none of the twelve categories, as they had no direct connection with fire and its prevention, but tended to have a very general approach to the subject of safety.

About half of the local authority fire brigades in England produce fire prevention handbooks. These contain equal amounts of general fire prevention advice, and of advertisements, and are distributed to the general public at meetings, and by door-to-door delivery.

Twenty-five of the handbooks were selected for an analysis of the fire prevention material they contained. From each handbook, eight pages were chosen at random, ignoring any pages containing advertisements. The subject matter at the centre of each page was analysed and classified in the same way as the fire prevention slogans. A total of 200 pages were dealt with in this way, and the results are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 1.

Classification of fire prevention slogans - percentages

MAIN CATEGORY	SUBSIDIARY CATEGORY												Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1. Care about fire risks	9.5	1.5		1	1.5	-	0.5				0.5	-	15
2. Technical aspects of fire prevention	-	8	-	2	2		-			1	-		14
3. Fire prevention	2.5	1	5	2.5	1.5	-	-	-		-	0.5		14
4. Death, injury and loss of life due to fire	3	1.5	1.5	2.5	1	-	-			0.5	-	-	11
5. Safety	2	0.5	-	0.5	4	0.5	-			0.5	-	-	9
6. Limiting fire	0.5	-	-	-	0.5	5				0.5	-	-	7
7. Fire Education	-			1.5	-		2		-		-	0.5	5
8. Freedom from fire					1				3		-		4
9. Fire as an enemy and a friend	-			0.5	-	-				3			4
10. Protecting children from fire	-	1.5	-	-	0.5		-			0.5			3.5
11. Fire brigade	-						0.5				1		1.5
12. Loss of property due to fire												0.5	0.5

Slogans having no direct connection with fire prevention

9

Total*

97.5%

Note: - indicates less than 0.5%

* The apparent discrepancy in the total is due to rounding of percentages.

TABLE 2.

Classification of fire prevention literature - percentages

MAIN CATEGORY	SUBSIDIARY CATEGORY												Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1. Care about fire risks	7.5	1	0.5	0.5	2.5			0.5		0.5			13
2. Technical aspects of fire prevention	6.5	19	2.5	1.5	0.5			1		2.5		0.5	34
3. Fire prevention	2		3		4						1	0.5	10.5
4. Death, injury and loss of life due to fire	2	1.5		1.5	0.5	0.5	1			0.5			7.5
5. Safety	0.5	1	1		6								8.5
6. Limiting fire	0.5					2							2.5
7. Fire Education							0.5			0.5			1
8. Freedom from fire								0.5					0.5
9. Fire as an enemy and a friend													0
10. Protecting children from fire	1	0.5								2.5			4
11. Fire brigade	2		1.5	1.5		0.5	0.5			0.5	9.5		16
12. Loss of property due to fire	1			0.5								1	2.5
													100

DISCUSSION

Although the rules of the competition stated that the fire prevention slogans should be original, many of the competitors had obviously copied or adapted slogans used in National fire prevention campaigns, and slogans used in the 'Make Leicester Fire-safe' campaign. Phrases such as 'Keep fire safely in its place', and 'Make Leicester Fire-safe' appeared quite frequently in the slogans, which also tended to contain old, well known clichés, such as 'Be safe - not sorry'. In fact, 9 per cent of the slogans were found to have no direct connection with fire prevention at all.

About 40 per cent of the slogans fell into the first three categories in Table 1, these being directly connected with fire prevention. In contrast, almost 60 per cent of the fire prevention literature analysed fell into these categories, and the fire brigades gave much more emphasis to the technical side of fire prevention, than the public did in their slogans. This may be partly due to the fact that the majority of the entrants were female, who may have less knowledge of such things as electrical appliances, heaters and fire extinguishers.

It would seem, therefore, that the fire brigades are justified in devoting a third of the available space in their handbooks to these matters, to try to educate the public in the maintenance of electrical equipment and wiring, and to use fire guards in the house, to quote just two examples. Very few members of the public seem to realise the extent of property loss due to fire in this country. This fact was emphasised more in the fire prevention handbooks, often in relation to farms, shops and factories, as well as houses and caravans.

The public seemed well aware of the loss of life and injury caused by fire. The slogans tended to emphasise the sentimental aspects of death, however, where the fire brigades tended to treat it in a more factual way, but still gave the subject the importance it merits.

It was found that 16 per cent of the material in the fire prevention handbooks was about the fire brigades themselves, a small proportion of this figure being instruction on how to call the fire brigade when fire occurred. However, most of this material consisted either of a history of the brigade who had produced the handbook, or a detailed description of the new buildings and appliances that the brigade had recently acquired. It seems probable that the space devoted to these topics in the handbooks could be used more profitably to give general fire prevention advice to the public, especially as the slogans reveal such a lack of specific fire prevention knowledge.

CONCLUSIONS

Few of the competitors who wrote the slogans appeared to have more than a vague idea of fire prevention, and it seems, therefore, that the fire brigades concerned would be justified in devoting more space in their fire prevention handbooks to the subject of general and technical fire prevention in the home.

REFERENCE

- (1) Fire prevention handbooks prepared by Malcolm Page Limited, for 25 local authority fire brigades.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks are due to Deputy Chief Fire Officer J. E. Slack, County Borough of Bolton Fire Brigade, formerly Senior Fire Prevention Officer of the City of Leicester Fire Department, for supplying the competition entry forms for analysis.

The work described in this paper forms part of the programme of the Joint Fire Research Organization of the Ministry of Technology and Fire Offices' Committee; the paper is published by permission of the Director of Fire Research.

APPENDIX I

Further details of categories under which several concepts were grouped.

Category 1: Care about fire risks.

Taking care and precautions to avoid risks and danger of fire, and checking the home to prevent fire.

Category 2: Technical aspects of fire prevention.

The checking of electrical appliances, wires and heaters, the removal of mirrors if placed over the fireplace, and the use of fireguards and of well-designed ashtrays to prevent fire occurring. Fire extinguishers are included in this category.

Category 5: Safety.

Safety from Fire, including safety in the house.

Category 6: Limiting Fire.

This category includes slogans containing phrases such as 'stop fire!' and 'keep fire in its place'.

Category 7: Fire education.

Encouragement to learn about fire and its prevention, and to have foresight of fire.

Category 10: Protecting children from fire.

Some slogans warned parents to protect their children from fire, by stopping any possibility of them playing with matches, and by guarding fires in the home.

