



Winchester Fire and Rescue

FIRE, RESCUE, HAZARDOUS MATERIALS & EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

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TO: All Fire and Rescue Personnel
FROM: Gary Ganoë, Captain
RE: Fire Prevention Week
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FIRE PREVENTION WEEK October 4-10 2009

Winchester Fire and Rescue Department Urges Winchester Residents to “Stay Fire Smart, Don’t Get Burned”

A pot holder too close to a lit burner or a space heater left on overnight could be all it takes to start a home fire. In Fact, cooking and heating are among the leading causes of home fires in the United States according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

That’s why Winchester Fire and Rescue Department is teaming up with NFPA from October 4-10 to urge Winchester residents to “Stay Fire Smart, Don’t Get Burned” during Fire Prevention Week. This year’s campaign focuses on preventing all the leading causes of home fires-cooking, heating and electrical equipment, and smoking materials. Additionally, fire safety educators will be teaching local residents how to plan and practice escape from a home in case a fire occurs.

According to the latest research from NFPA, more than 2,500 people died in home fires in the United States in 2006, and 12,500 were injured. Fire departments responded to 396,000 home fires, which accounted for 80% of civilian deaths and 76% of injuries that year.

While the number of home fires is daunting, the good news is that many are easily preventable when residents take simple steps to increase their safety from fire. Whether it’s smoking outside the home, keeping space heaters at least three feet away from

anything that can burn, or staying in the kitchen when you are using the stovetop, there are easy things you can do to keep your home and family safe from fire.

Do you know how to keep your home safe from fire hazards? Reviewing the following information and taking action can help you “Stay Fire Smart, Don’t Get Burned” during Fire Prevention Week and year-round.

- **Cooking:** Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- **Heating:** Keep all things that can burn, such as paper, bedding or furniture at least three feet away from heating equipment.
- **Electrical:** Replace cracked and damaged electrical cords; use extension cords for temporary wiring only. Consider having additional circuits or receptacles added by a qualified electrician.
- **Smoking:** If you smoke, smoke outside; wherever you smoke, use deep, sturdy ashtrays.

***A full schedule of events throughout September, October and November will be forthcoming with continual updates as needed. As always, please make every effort to encourage volunteer assistance and/or participation in this event.**

***A cover letter to be given to all school students is available and sufficient copies are to be taken to each public education event. Additionally, coloring/activity books are also available and to be given to age specific groups. Any materials left over are to be returned along with any props utilized for instruction as soon as practical so they may be available for staff at other assigned events.**

If you need any assistance, please contact me.

Commemorating a conflagration

Fire Prevention Week was established to commemorate the Great Chicago Fire, the tragic 1871 conflagration that killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures and burned more than 2,000 acres. The fire began on October 8, but continued into and did most of its damage on October 9, 1871.



According to popular legend, the fire broke out after a cow - belonging to Mrs. Catherine O'Leary - kicked over a lamp, setting first the barn, then the whole city on fire. Chances are you've heard some version of this story yourself; people have been blaming the Great Chicago Fire on the cow and Mrs. O'Leary, for more than 130 years. But recent research by Chicago historian Robert Cromie has helped to debunk this version of events.

The 'Moo' myth

Like any good story, the 'case of the cow' has some truth to it. The great fire almost certainly started near the barn where Mrs. O'Leary kept her five milking cows. But there is no proof that O'Leary was in the barn when the fire broke out - or that a jumpy cow sparked the blaze. Mrs. O'Leary herself swore that she'd been in bed early that night, and that the cows were also tucked in for the evening.

But if a cow wasn't to blame for the huge fire, what was? Over the years, journalists and historians have offered plenty of theories. Some blamed the blaze on a couple of neighborhood boys who were near the barn sneaking cigarettes. Others believed that a neighbor of the O'Leary's may have started the fire. Some people have speculated that a fiery meteorite may have fallen to earth on October 8, starting several fires that day - in Michigan and Wisconsin, as well as in Chicago.

The biggest blaze that week

While the Great Chicago Fire was the best-known blaze to start during this fiery two-day stretch, it wasn't the biggest. That distinction goes to the Peshtigo Fire, the most devastating forest fire in American history. The fire, which also occurred on October 8th, 1871, and roared through Northeast Wisconsin, burning down 16 towns, killing 1,152 people, and scorching 1.2 million acres before it ended.

Historical accounts of the fire say that the blaze began when several railroad workers clearing land for tracks unintentionally started a brush fire. Before long, the fast-moving flames were whipping through the area 'like a tornado,' some survivors said. It was the small town of Peshtigo, Wisconsin that suffered the worst damage. Within an hour, the entire town had been destroyed.

Cc: File

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