

A p a r t m e n t

SAFETY NOTES



SPOKANE FIRE DEPARTMENT

October, 2011

Fire Prevention Week: Oct. 9-15

Go To:
FirePreventionWeek.org



Protect Your Family From Fire

October 9–15, 2011 • It's Fire Prevention Week



It's time to celebrate National Fire Prevention Week and check into the 2011 theme of "Protect Your Family from Fire!"

On the surface, that just appears like common sense. However, there are some important notions included in the message. Recent research from the

National Fire Protection Association underscores that children learn much more when the focus is on doing something positive. Teachers and parents know that as well! But we sometimes fail to live that lesson within our everyday adult responsibilities or with our extended families. So here are some "family protection tips" for our annual remembrance of The Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

- Teach tenants how to read the back of a smoke detector to know the type of detector they have (ionization or photoelectric or both) and how old it is. They can better alert you when it's time to change out the detector.
- Remind tenants to test their detectors on the first of every month to assure the batteries are still connected and working. *(A Spokane family of 6 came within 1 minute of injury or death in an August fire where the batteries were disconnected and the tenants had assumed only the landlord could test detectors).*
- Encourage tenants to turn on a timer every time they begin to cook. This protects them from unattended cooking fires.
- Remind tenants to keep a pan lid handy whenever cooking in order to quickly smother a small grease fire.
- Encourage tenants to carry renter's insurance because the annual premium of about \$150 far outweighs the personal losses or liability from fire.
- Keep ashtrays available near outdoor plantings to encourage smokers to use the safe containers rather than stub out a smoldering butt in organic potting soil or mulch that burns.

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- Clear a 3-foot area around space and baseboard heaters so that nothing can start a fire as days and nights turn cool.
- Keep exit paths open and fire doors closed to provide a safe path of escape if needed.
- Help each family understand the fire escape plan for their building.

Q: SMOKE DETECTOR LIFE SPAN?

A: 10 YEARS OR LESS



Whether the smoke detector is hardwired into the electrical system or one that is simply screwed into the ceiling, it still has a limited life span.

While it is recommended that detectors be replaced at least every 10 years, some detectors may fail long before that.

The 10 year replacement schedule is based on a statistical average failure of 3% per year. After 10 years, that means the detector has a 30 % (and statistically unacceptable) predicted rate of failure to alarm. In many cases, the horn will last longer. But that does not mean that the alarm system is trustworthy...only that there may be a siren working if the button is pressed.

Spokane Fire Department recently found a smoke detector in an apartment that was dated Mar 21 1980. In short, the various tenants who have lived in that unit since March 1990 were never protected by a working smoke detector. The landlord and tenants have simply been lucky.

Paying \$15 for a new detector pales in comparison to the potential for serious injury, death, destroyed property and probable lawsuit.

For a review of ionization and photoelectric smoke detectors, read the February 2010 and October 2010 issues of this newsletter at www.spokanefire.org under "Prevention".

You can sign up for this monthly newsletter, ask a fire-related question or suggest a specific safety topic by contacting Jan Doherty at jdoherty@spokanefire.org or by calling 625-7058.



FIRE HISTORY

- Fire Prevention Week always includes October 9th because that was the day in 1871 when The Great Chicago Fire gained full strength as it swept through the city.
- The fire killed more than 250 persons, destroyed 17,400 structures, left 100,000 homeless and burned a section of Chicago stretching 4 miles long and 1 mile wide. Compare that to current Spokane!
- Mrs. O'Leary's cow did not kick over a lantern to start the chain of fire! Fire officials could not confirm the actual cause but speculated about careless neighbors smoking in or near the O'Leary's barn.
- The Great Peshtigo Fire started at about the same time on October 8, 1871 near what is now Green Bay WI. It scorched more than 1.2 million acres, burned 16 smaller towns and killed over 1,100 people. It is the deadliest wildfire in U.S. history.
- The weather condition for the Great Chicago and Peshtigo Fires was similar to the hot, dry winds that occurred on October 16, 1991 and the start of Spokane's own "Fire Storm '91".



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