

## S A F E T Y N O T E S

April 2014



## SAFETY “Ins and Outs”

When it comes to the everyday activities associated with getting into or out of one’s home, it can become too easy to navigate on our own “cruise control”. But such an approach can overlook potential obstacles that could change a taken-for-granted pathway to an entrapment during a fire scenario.

Fire and medical response is significantly slowed down whenever the building address is difficult to see from the middle of the street. For larger apartment complexes, it is essential that fire lanes always be maintained for Fire Department usage only. Building complexes designed with multiple clusters of apartments should have clearly marked site maps at the entrance. For every apartment, individual units should have easy-to-read unit numbers or letters on the door.

Once on scene, any emergency situation can further escalate if firefighters/paramedics are unable to enter the building because of an outdated Knox box. Whenever locks are changed, master keys or swipe cards must be updated as well. If you need to check on the accuracy of keys in your Knox box, call Spokane Fire Department at 509.625.7000 for assistance.

Once inside a building, it is critical that main pathways are not blocked by decorations, furniture or storage. Look at your hallways from the perspective of a firefighter or tenant trying to navigate in dense smoke or EMTs trying to roll a gurney to a patient.

Your building may be required to have back-up emergency lighting and exit signs to assure a safe passage out in the event of a fire or power failure. If so, check monthly to make sure these lights are all functioning correctly. Also, gasoline and other flammable liquids and fuel powered equipment such as lawnmowers, weed trimmers, and snow and leaf blowers are not allowed to be stored in buildings unless the building was designed for such use. These can present a serious life safety hazard for residents in case of fire.

Building codes specify the size and spacing of steps. Uneven or missing stairs can spell serious liability in a fall and real tragedy in a fire emergency. Stairs require handrails placed at a minimum of 42" in height and constructed so that the hand can easily grasp them.

If you rent individual houses, you must make sure that basement rooms will never be used as bedrooms unless they have egress windows. Look at the exit possibilities from second or third floor bedrooms. Would you allow a member of your own family to stay in them overnight?

## X-IT

Spokane Fire Department does not recommend a particular business or product. However it is helpful to know that there are alternatives to the most common portable fire escape ladders. Many of the two and three story escape ladders now sold in hardware stores state they are good for just one use only. Part of the reason for that disclaimer is the difficulty in repacking the ladder once it is used.

The X-IT ladder that can be seen at [www.escapeladder.com](http://www.escapeladder.com) is lightweight and easy to repack so that it can be used for practice. It costs about \$90 and is not limited to one use only.



There are a number of permanent ladders available for second or third floor bedrooms. Some of these look like a slim drain pipe when not in use. They are activated from inside the home and pop out so the rungs are at a 90 degree angle to the house. Google the internet or view one sample that costs about \$330 at [www.calicoladders.com](http://www.calicoladders.com).

## CRIME FREE MULTI-HOUSING



Spokane Fire Department provides the firesafety session that is part of the two-day training for landlords and property managers coordinated by Spokane C.O.P.S. The Spring 2014 sessions will be on April 17 and April 24 at 2120 E. 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. The \$75 fee covers the training manual and lunch on April 17. For more information and to register, contact Maurece Vulcano at 509.835.4572 or [mvulcanot@spokanepolice.org](mailto:mvulcanot@spokanepolice.org)

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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](mailto:jdoherty@spokanefire.org) or by calling 509.625.7058.



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