

## SAFETY NOTES

January, 2015

### FRESH START

With the beginning of 2015, you may already have a list of safety “resolutions”! The following calendar of suggestions may help you keep on track throughout the year. Rearrange the tasks to fit your needs and check off the ones you know are already handled!



**January:** Check with your tenants to make sure their required carbon monoxide detectors are still functioning well and the tenants know what CO detectors are for and what to do when the alarm sounds.

**February:** Take a clue from “Burn Prevention Month” and make sure the hot water temperature is set at 120 degrees Fahrenheit in all units.

**March:** Check your list of smoke detectors that will be 10 years old in 2015 and replace them with photoelectric detectors powered by 10-year lithium batteries.

**April:** Use a sunny spring-cleaning day to scout out unused hazardous materials, cluttered storage areas, or combustibles that would be an easy target for an arsonist. Recycle, reuse or dispose what is not needed.

**May:** Review the “smoking status” of your properties. If there are ashtrays outdoors, make sure they are safely away from the building itself. Remind tenants that stubbing out a cigarette in potting soil has ignited houses and apartments in Spokane

**June:** Check the addressing on your properties to make sure the house numbers are easily visible from the street and buildings are clearly marked for emergency response crews.

**July:** Check with property managers and tenants to assure everyone is aware of the fireworks ban in Spokane as well as outdoor burning restrictions.

**August:** Make sure the exits are up to code in your properties. Keep interior corridors clear and fire doors shut. Inspect fire escape ladders for rust or loose connections. Assure that “burglar bars” have a release mechanism from inside the building.

**September:** Make appointments to have needed furnace or chimney repairs that will help prevent winter fires.



**October:** Review the fire escape planning for each of your properties so the managers and tenants are knowledgeable of what they must do in the event of a fire. Everyone needs to know how to report a fire, how to exit from their apartment, and how to safely account for everyone in the building.

**November:** Check the property for potential fall zones and provide repairs or replacements as required: unsecured handrails, uneven flooring or pavement, unlit common areas, loose or broken steps.

**December:** Inspect the electrical system for the building. Consider upgrading where there are insufficient outlets for a typical unit with computer and entertainment center requirements.

*Have a Safe and Happy New Year!*

## AFCI Update

According to the 2011 National Electric Code, section 406.4(D)(4) requires arc-fault circuit-interrupter (AFCI) updates as of January 1, 2014. The AFCI device is designed to help prevent electrical fires by detecting an unintended electrical arc and disconnecting the power before the arc causes a fire. As of 1/1/14, replacing old outlets in old construction residential rooms now requires the same AFCI protection as required in new construction.

Electrical fires ranked as the third leading cause of residential fires in the last 5-year study by the US Fire Administration that was completed in 2011. Single family homes and duplexes accounted for 84% of reported electrical fires while multifamily residences accounted for just 12%. According to USFA, one reason for this difference is attributed to the fact that multifamily structures typically comply with more stringent fire and building code requirements and are monitored by maintenance professionals.

Most electrical fires occur during the winter months. The majority (89%) of electrical fires in the report were caused by “heat from powered equipment” and within that category electrical arcing accounted for 82% of the fires.

While conventional circuit breakers respond to overloads and short circuits, they do not protect against arcing.

One advantage to AFCI protection is the peace of mind that comes from recognizing that electrical fires still rank as the third leading cause of fires nationally and then acting on that knowledge to update outlets as a protective measure.



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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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