

HOT SPOTS

Independence Fire Department • 950 North Spring • Independence • MO • 64050

January 2008



Happy New Year

The Time Is Now To Plan And Practice It: Home Fire Escape

Maybe putting this in a Fire Department publication is kind of like preaching to the choir, but people are people, so here it is. Many people and families follow a series of items on a schedule or a to-do list to keep things running smoothly. Sound familiar? There is one item that should get top billing on everyone's list: Plan and practice a home fire escape. This item should be marked *Must Do Now*. Whether the list of tasks is posted on the refrigerator door, is a running tally in your head or takes on the form of a reminder that lives in your latest organizer gadget, the time is now to get this item moved to your *Done* list.

Everyone thinks that tragedies like home fires happen in other communities and to other people. That's probably what the people affected by the 381,000 home fires that occurred in the United States in 2005 thought too, before it happened to them. Unlike many things that can get postponed for a day or two with little consequence, planning and practicing your home fire escape simply isn't one of them.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, 3,030 people were killed in those fires. That's one person every three hours. Does preparing for escape still sound like something that can be put off for another day?

As well as being prepared to escape a fire, it is equally important to be vigilant about preventing one from happening in the first place. Many times there is something that you can do so that a fire doesn't begin, like paying attention to what you are cooking, for example. Cooking is the number one cause of home fires and unattended cooking is the leading cause. The next time you have dinner on the stove and think about leaving the room, think again.

If a fire occurs don't you want to be prepared to escape from it? If you and your neighbors have not taken the time to plan and practice your home fire escape plan, you are not alone: National studies show that only 23% of households do have a plan. This is something that can literally mean the difference between surviving a fire and being the victim of one.

It's time for the residents of Independence to get ready for the very real possibility that a fire can occur in their home and being prepared to escape from one is extremely important.

Here's what you need to do right now:

- Install a smoke alarm on every level of your home and have one inside each sleep room and outside of each sleeping area.

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Message From The Chief

It was my first Christmas at the fire station. Lots of food. Families had come and gone. We had made a few medical calls (nothing much). It was very cold, I remember that in particular. I was a relatively new fire fighter, still learning the basics (still am for the record) and this day I was to learn what it truly meant to be a fire fighter. The tones went off, smoke in a residence, multiple companies responded. We were first in, elderly couple, malfunctioning furnace and the home was cooling off quickly. The lieutenant returned all companies except ours. We shut down the furnace and I thought as usual we would clear the scene and go back to the station. However, that's not what happened at all. The lieutenant put us back in service but he made no move to leave; our driver didn't move toward the door either. Instead, the lieutenant asked for a phone book and began making calls to find a repair person. The driver began visiting, asking about family, first getting the old man and then the old woman telling stories about a favorite Christmas tradition or a particular friend. The lieutenant spoke up and said he had found a repair person that would come out to fix the furnace. He then told the couple that we might have to leave, but asked if it would be ok if we stayed for a few minutes. The stories continued and smiles started where only concern and loneliness were present just a short time earlier. The repair person showed up and joined the stories and smiles for awhile and soon the furnace was fixed. When my lieutenant finally said it was time to go, everyone was warm outside and inside. I don't have to tell you what the lesson was. You are all part of the fire service family.

Chief Schiess

What's Happening?

TRAINING

Drug Awareness in the Workplace training for all personnel is now being conducted by Mr. Dick Reddy of Alternatives, our EAP provider.

The following 18 Independence Fire personnel have completed the Principles of Building Construction: Non-Combustible training offered through the Missouri University Fire & Rescue Training Institute: Josh Carrick, Mark Carrick, Mike Ditamore, Craig Duplantis, John Greene, Mike Hall, Andrew Harris, Devin Jones, Jeff Keogh, Mike McQuinn, Don Moritz, Brian Murphy, Mike Perkins, Jared Petentler, David Sellars, David Shelley, Daryl Wood and Travis Wrisinger.

Fifteen personnel have completed training to become Instructors for the new Compressed Air Foam System (CAFS). Our two newest pumper trucks are equipped with CAFS and a third has been ordered. The pumps in the new vehicles mix foam liquid with water and air to produce a foamy agent which is able to extinguish fires more quickly, with less possibility of steam burn injuries to fire fighters and less water damage than water alone. The foam also forms a protective coating on burned areas to prevent rekindles. All fire personnel will soon receive training for CAFS from the following fifteen instructors as weather permits: Bill Anderson, Steve Bailey, Jim Buckingham, Mark Carrick, Mike Ditamore, John Greene, Bob Hudson, Jeff Keogh, Dave Kinnison, Brian Murphy, Mike Perkins, Kelly Scott, David Sellars, David Shelley and Brad Waterworth.



Compressed Air Foam System training

OPERATIONS

Due to the retirement of Chief Thompson, Operations will be for the next few months staffed first by Chief Krickle and then by Chief Greene. We are making it a top priority to maintain consistency within Operations. Some of the issues we are trying to address are staffing issues and developing procedures for operating in the underground areas at GeoSpace. Also fire ground accountability has been a topic of discussion

during Operations meetings. During this time of change we will do our best to maintain consistency and our door will remain open for suggestions.

ADMINISTRATION

New Station 4 Progress: The exterior of the structure including siding, brick and roof are complete. HVAC and wiring are progressing on the inside. When the weather permits, sidewalks and curbs will be installed. We are still looking at an early 2008 opening.



New Station 4

EMS

FF McGinley recently completed her paramedic course and passed the National Registry Exam. She is now a Nationally Registered Paramedic and licensed in the State of Missouri, working as a FF/Paramedic for the Independence Fire Department.

We received two new LifePak 12 Cardiac Monitors. The monitors, as well as Advanced Life Support (ALS) bags, will be placed at stations 8 and 9 in the near future, allowing them to provide ALS care on medical alarms when they are staffed with a FF/Paramedic.

Six new recruits will start on January 8: 1 FF/Paramedic, 3 FF/EMTs that are currently in paramedic school and 2 FF/EMTs.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mark Widner has been working in conjunction with the R.A.C.E.S. volunteer group on a new website for those who would like to volunteer within the City of Independence as well as the surrounding areas. The web site is www.readytohelp.org. The purpose of the website is to help educate and coordinate the volunteers as well as assisting them in communicating with each other. The site is also intended for deploying CERT volunteers. Mark has also been working on Grants, Disaster Declaration and Regional Coordination Guide. CERT classes will begin in February. We have partnered with Metropolitan Community College at Blue River to teach at their campus. The classes will be taught by Independence Firefighters.

FIRE PREVENTION

In the business of fire prevention my experience has been we are more productive working as a team. I appreciate those department members who have brought their experience to the table and to my attention with a mission of making fire prevention better in our department and for our community. Many conversations have taken place, concepts and ideas shared and many are under review for immediate or future implementation. Some conversations have created more questions and involve positive change. I appreciate the insight of all who have shared and anticipate and welcome the input of those I have yet to meet.

For days and years to come we will witness many changes in the way we fight fires. Who would have dreamed a few years ago we would be attacking structure fires with water plus foam products? September 11, 2001 was another event which changed us forever. Just like fire fighting, fire prevention methodology is changing.

The history of the Independence Fire Department is displayed throughout the training room of station 1, and I am in amazement every time I look at the photographs and the long tradition they contain. In some ways, it is sad that these traditions could not be replayed in our world today, but the fact of the matter is that we are light years ahead of those old pictures for the betterment of our department. I could not help notice that not one of the old photographs of the Independence Fire Department had ever captured a public education event. Today Inspector Tom Wade's computer is filled with photographs from fire safety education events. What a change.

I was once told that change will come and be assured it will. In our department and throughout the nation, public education has evolved to the point that it is possible any one or number of firefighters could be photographed in an environment where they are educating the public. What a difference education can make. Just ask one or two questions to successfully measure this statement after you have completed a fire safety event. People listen and they do learn.

Unfortunately, we recently lost Ms. Clara Burton, a



Inspector Tom Wade educating children on fire safety



long time fixture and resident of our community and she will forever be associated with our historical data as a fire victim. Clara's family lost a mother, grandmother, friend, etc. I am angry about it and every one of us should view it this way. I spent a few minutes with Clara's family the day after the fire. My emotions were in my throat, but I was proud of our department knowing the family knew she was given another small chance at life through Independence Fire search and rescue efforts. The family was appreciative of the firefighters who did what they could and the risk they took for Ms. Burton. However fire department rescue operations are reactionary, this is not enough for our community. Rescue efforts simply equate as the final effort to preserve life through the actions and courage of brave men and women. I am proud of this tradition and have lived it, but it is not enough. Rescue efforts did not change her outcome and our prevention efforts may not have been enough to prevent her death. All we really know is she had a non-working smoke detector, so some exposure to fire education may have been in her history. Was she somehow missed during fire safety efforts? How could we have made a more effective connection with Ms. Burton? A working smoke detector is absolutely critical. Did she ignore warnings? Was age a factor in her decisions that lead to that fatal day? Was her mobility a problem? This was not my first fire fatality experience, however I still find myself frustrated and angry that life was not preserved.

I know we must put more effort into fire education and there are several hundred if not several thousand reports and studies to support this, but for some reason we fail to address such well documented recommendations. Our national court system will not allow us to apply enforcement codes upon a residence as we can a business, and therefore the alternative to a code application is primarily an approach in education. It is a reasonable approach and counter-effort to a broad and very serious fire problem in this community.

I am convinced Chief Schiess is committed to an ever increasing effort of public education and my goal is that fire education efforts will increase. There are immediate decisions and actions which can be implemented regarding public education. For example, City 7 is a low cost media we can use now

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- Test smoke alarms at least once a month.
- Develop a fire escape plan that identifies two ways out of each room and a family meeting place outside.
- Make sure your plan allows for any specific needs in your household. If everyone knows what to do, everyone can get out quickly.
- Practice using the plan at least twice a year. If everyone knows that everyone else is ready to exit quickly, no one will lose precious time trying to help someone who doesn't need help.
- Some children and adults may not awaken to the sound of the smoke alarm. They may need help to wake up.

Don't let another day go by without planning and practicing your home fire escape plan. You never know when you may need to use it. And don't forget it once you move it to your *DONE* list. It is something that should be reviewed and practiced at least twice a year.

Submitted by Tom Wade

to immediately increase our effort. More comprehensive decisions pertaining to our public education programming will develop in time. Use of our web site is another tool which is currently undergoing some improvements. With today's media we can reach more of our customers than I ever believed possible when I first entered the profession many years ago.

We must realize that change is coming and prepare for it. More public education of fire safety and outreach efforts to our citizens is essential. With additional education, not only will we potentially save the lives of our citizens, but increase the chance of returning each Independence Firefighter home safely to their own families.

Gene Gould

*Hot Spots is published quarterly by the Independence Fire Department, Fire Prevention Division.
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A Job Well Done

Recently several letters of commendation were sent out to various members of this Department at the recommendation of Assistant Chief Sellars. Chief Sellars wanted to make sure I knew that "all crews involved performed their tasks in a superior manner" In addition to the above -- Firefighter Davies and Firefighter McGinley, your efforts were noted in particular. Below are some excerpts from the various letters from Chief Sellars.

(Alarm #13447) Captain Brad Waterworth and Firefighter/Paramedic Joe Giambrone: ". . . Upon our arrival there was smoke showing from a single family residential house. Numerous neighbors and family were in the front yard and on the front porch with a water hose. They reported that they had tried to put the fire out but it was too hot inside and the female resident was still inside. Captain Waterworth was the first captain on scene; he and Firefighter Giambrone entered the structure to search for the missing female. They found her in a back bedroom and removed her to the front yard . . ."

(Alarm #13688) Captain Mark Watkins and Firefighter Matt Klick: ". . . Captain Watkins was the first captain on scene and proceeded to the second floor to investigate while his firefighter was pulling an attack line from Pumper #1. A neighbor was standing on the deck and stated that he thought the neighbor had burnt some food and was trying to put it out. Captain Watkins noticed that the windows were blackened out, and after learning that someone was inside he forced open the door. Immediately heavy carbon loaded smoke came out of the door, he noted that the smoke had banked down to about one foot above the floor. Captain Watkins crawled across the floor sweeping for a body, as he neared the bedroom he could hear someone gasping for air. He found the occupant crumpled beneath a window that had been broken out. Captain Watkins began dragging the resident toward the front door. As he neared the front door Firefighters Klick and Davies met him and together they removed the resident to the deck outside the structure. Firefighter Klick supervised the medical treatment while Captain Watkins and Firefighter Davies went back inside with a hose line to extinguish the fire."

Reference the actions of all crews on both scenes: ". . . Fire attack was fast and effective, ventilation rapidly cleared the heavy smoke and overhaul was complete. I am grateful for the way they all performed at this incident."

From my cover letter for each personnel file ". . . I cannot say it enough, particularly under these circumstances: I am incredibly honored to work with and represent the men and women of this Department, whose service and commitment to save lives and property you exemplified with your actions . . ."

Sandra K. Schiess