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FIRE PREVENTION TALK TO BE GIVEN BY BLOCK MANAGERS

by Fire Protection Officer, Glenn B. Rumley

Ladies and Gentlemen: As you doubtless know, the week of October 9 is annually designated by Presidential proclamation as Fire Prevention Week. The purpose of this week is twofold: first to emphasize in the public mind the enormous waste of life and property due to fire, secondly to enlist the cooperation of all occupants in a community in effecting an actual reduction of this fire waste, not only during Fire Prevention Week but throughout the fifty-two weeks of the year.

The fire loss at this Center for its first year of existence was \$4,180.00, thus making our per capita loss thirty-eight cents. This figure as compared with the National Fire loss with a per capita loss of \$2.14 was a commendable achievement. Had it not been through the combined efforts of all persons concerned, this could not have been accomplished.

It is estimated that the annual fire loss of the nation is nearly \$500,000,000. Fully three-quarters of this tremendous total was caused by carelessness and ignorance.

The ten principal sources of fire loss in order according to property values involved are: Exposure, Matches and smoking, Defective chimneys and flues, Stoves and their pipes, Misuse of electricity, Spontaneous combustion, Sparks on roofs, Petroleum and its products, Lightning, Hot ashes and coals.

Let's clean up all rubbish. Indoors it catches fire from dropped matches, cigarette stubs, poor wiring, and many other causes; outdoors rubbish catches sparks and spreads fire and is especially dangerous when a wind springs up. Even when there is some other first cause, frequently there would be little or no loss if rubbish didn't spread fire. Stoves, defective chimneys and flues are a few of the common causes of fire. Before use this winter all stovepipes and flues should be examined to be sure they are spark tight. If any woodwork is close to stove or stove pipe flue, it should be protected.

Bonfires sometimes spring to life long after they are left for dead. They should be scattered and actually extinguished before leaving. Only a little thought is needed to prevent fires from smoking, electric bulbs too close to wood or paper, electric irons left while turned on, gasoline used for cleaning, oily rags and dust mops, and the other causes of fire. Let's talk to the children about fire and accident prevention. We can keep matches away from them and guard them against many dangers, but we must also patiently train them not to take needless chances. Parents and other grown-ups are responsible for the children.

Here are a few safety rules which you can observe and which you can encourage others to heed. Store oils, paints, polishes and volatile liquids outside the building or in fire resistive vaults. Waste paper and rubbish should be removed as quickly as they accumulate and safely disposed of. After use, electric irons, toasters and other appliances should be immediately disconnected. General cleanliness makes for less fire danger. Preventable fires seldom start in clean places. Oily rags or mops should be kept in metal containers when not in use. Unprotected, they present danger from spontaneous combustion.

Care should be exercised in handling alcohol, gasoline, or kerosens and they should never be kept in the home. There should be no holes in flooring, walls or ceiling. These help a fire get started. Lighted matches, cigars or cigarettes should be extinguished before they are thrown away. Insecticides should be kept away from open flames.

The annual fire waste is more far-reaching than the heavy loss of life and property, bad as it is. It represents the wholesale destruction of irreplaceable raw materials. It causes want and suffering to those whose homes have been reduced to smoking ashes. Although fire insurance lessens the economic ills due to fire waste, it cannot replace life and material that have been destroyed.

The first five minutes of a fire is the best time to stop it. Extinguishers should be kept handy. The location of the nearest fire alarm box should be noted. In giving the alarm by phone, the exact location should be given. If you don't know the Fire Department number, ask the operator to connect you, without taking time to look it up.

The normal fire waste is a serious problem. If we are to successfully curtail the staggering fire losses, everyone must not only be aware of the danger, but each must take an active part in continuous warfare against it.

What can you do to help keep down fire losses? You can follow the ordinary fire prevention rules and instruct others about them. You can take part in Fire Prevention Week, which is held every year in the month of October, and encourage your friends and neighbors to enter into it also. Better still, make every day Fire Prevention Day throughout the entire year.

When combustion, which is fire, takes place, the material burned can never be returned to its former state. Whatever its value, it is lost. That is why the practice of fire prevention is of major importance to the economic welfare of every section of the country. With your help and cooperation the Fire Department will be better qualified to give you and your loved ones adequate protection and the feeling of safety from fire.

Thank you,