



DIVISION OF FIRE SAFETY

OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL & STATE FIRE ACADEMY

Central Office Berlin 802-479-7561 State Fire Academy Office Pittsford 802-483-2755

Regional Offices Barre 802-479-4434 * Rutland 802-786-5867 * Springfield 802-885-8883 * Williston 802-879-2300

www.vtfiresafety.org

FIRE SAFETY NEWS

March 2008



~ ANOTHER REMINDER ~

**March 9th is Daylight Savings Time!
Change Your Batteries & Turn Clocks Ahead 1 Hour**

Director's Message

John G. Wood

Photoelectric Smoke Detectors...Ionization Smoke Detectors - Which are Better?

The ionization smoke detectors, that were functional at the time of the fire, did not alarm soon enough to alert the occupants so that they could escape. This tragic fire in Barre City killed 5 people, a mother, her four children, and seriously injured the father on December 17, 2005. The Barre City Fire Department needed to find out what went wrong. Boston Deputy Fire Chief Jay Fleming heard about the fire and contacted Chief Peter John and the Division of Fire Safety inquiring about what went wrong.

Deputy Chief Fleming has been studying the differences between the two types of smoke detectors for 15 years. After further study and research the Barre City Fire Department decided to do a few smoke detector tests of their own. They arranged their tests following others who had also been doing tests to determine which device would be better for alerting people to smoke. They found that the photoelectric smoke detectors alarmed much quicker to smoldering fires. In some cases the ionization smoke detectors did not alarm at all.

It is documented by national organizations that ionization smoke detectors alarm anywhere from 30-50 **seconds** quicker in flaming fires than photoelectric, however, photoelectric smoke detectors alarm **minutes to hours** sooner in smoldering fires than ionization. Ionization smoke detectors also give more false alarms from cooking fumes or smoke causing people to disconnect their smoke detectors. People die, are injured or have their home destroyed in fires where smoke detectors are present but have been disconnected or are not working. Combination smoke detectors that use both ionization and photoelectric sensors are not the answer because they are still subject to nuisance alarms that could cause people to disconnect the alarm.

A large majority of the smoke detectors (alarms) installed in housing in Vermont and nationwide are ionization smoke detectors. The ionization detectors have worked in numerous fires, saving people from injury or death. Ionization smoke detectors are good, but photoelectric smoke detectors will be better - giving people more time to escape and minimizing nuisance alarms from cooking.

Since 1994, Vermont law has required that smoke detectors be installed in owner occupied single-family dwellings during new construction or when the dwelling is sold. Senator Vincent Illuzzi, Chair of the Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs committee, has been taking testimony to change the current law for owner occupied single-family dwellings to require photoelectric smoke detectors on each level of the home. In testimony we have heard of numerous fires where ionization smoke detectors did not work or worked too late to notify the occupants that the house was filling with smoke. The bottom line is that, although ionization smoke detectors may alert occupants seconds faster in flaming fires than photoelectric smoke detectors, the ionization smoke detectors are much slower to alert occupants in smoldering fires and are subject to nuisance alarms that cause people to disconnect their smoke detectors.



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VT HAZMAT TEAM NOTES

Chris Herrick, Chief, VHMRT

HAZMAT HOTLINE 1-800-641-5005**Common & Not So Common HAZMAT Terms**

As you begin to do research on a chemical there are a number of terms used regularly and some that are used intermittently depending on the properties of the particular substance and reference being utilized. In addition to the properties are 'action' levels which seem to cause the most confusion; so below are explanations and definitions.

Flash Point – The minimum temperature at which a liquid will give off a vapor which will ignite and immediately flash but will not continue to burn.

Lower Explosive Limit – The lowest percentage of a flammable vapor in air that will ignite. Below that percentage it would be considered too "Lean". For LP gas it is 2.1%.

Upper Explosive Limit – The highest percentage of a flammable vapor in air that will ignite. Above that is considered too "Rich". For LP gas it is 9.5%.

Ignition or Auto Ignition Temperature – The temperature at which a substance will ignite without the presence of a spark or open flame.

Vapor Pressure – Without getting too scientific the VP is the tendency of a liquid to evaporate. So the higher the VP, expressed in mmHG (millimeters of Mercury), the easier it will evaporate. VPs for common materials are: 382.58 mmHG for Gasoline, Diesel Fuel 2.17 mmHg and LP gas 9823.00 mmHg. So we can compare the relative evaporation of these substances by their VPs.

Specific Gravity – The weight of a given material when compared to an equal amount of water. Water is assigned an SG of 1 so a substance with an SG of 2 would sink in water and an SG of 0.5 would float.

Boiling Point – The temperature at which a substance will rapidly change from the liquid phase to the gaseous phase. The BP generally correlates with the Vapor pressure inversely. So a substance with a high VP will have a lower BP and a lower FP.

Molecular Weight – This is weight of one molecule of the substance. For example the MW of Carbon is (12) and the MW Oxygen is (16), so the CO₂ molecule has MW of 44 [(12) + 2(16) =44]. Carbon Monoxide CO has a MW of 28, [(12) + (16) = 28]. Normal air has a molecular weight of 28.9 very close to that of CO. Molecular weight is where the Vapor Density is derived (see below).

Vapor Density – This is the weight of a gas as compared to air. Air is assigned the number 1 so a substance with a VD of 2 would be heavier than air and one with a VD of .5 would be lighter than air. LP gas has a VD of 1.9 so it is heavier than air.

IDLH – Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health. This is the amount of a substance which will cause serious damage to health of exposed persons.

TLV TWA – Threshold Limit Value Time Weighted Average. This is the amount of a substance which an individual is allowed to be exposed to for a typical work week. A typical work week is defined as 40 hours, with 8 hour work days and typical breaks. This helps give relative toxicity.

TLV STEL – Threshold Limit Value Short Term Exposure Limit. This is the maximum concentration a worker is allowed to be exposed to for a 15 minute period. This may be done 4 times a day with at least one hour between exposures. TEEL-0

The threshold concentration below which most people will experience no appreciable risk of health effects when exposed for up to an hour.

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Director's Message John G. Wood

(continued from page 1)

We are gathering information to supplement the information we receive on smoke detector activation through the NFIRS reporting. If you are aware of any fire where a smoke detector was present in a residential fire, known to be functional, but did not alarm when the home was filled with a considerable amounts of smoke, or where a smoke detector did work and alert the occupants, please contact Robert Howe with the details at the central office, (802) 479-7561.

We believe that this change in the law will save lives in single-family homes and result in better protection for public buildings were people sleep. For more information about the proposed bill you can go on the state web-site, the bill number is S-226.

VT HAZMAT TEAM NOTES



Chris Herrick, Chief, VHMRT

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TEEL-1 (Temporary Emergency Exposure Limits)

The maximum concentration in air below which it is believed nearly all individuals could be exposed without experiencing other than mild transient adverse health effects or perceiving a clearly defined objectionable odor when exposed for up to an hour.

TEEL-2 (Temporary Emergency Exposure Limits)

The maximum concentration in air below which it is believed nearly all individuals could be exposed without experiencing or developing irreversible or other serious health effects or symptoms that could impair their abilities to take protective action when exposed for up to an hour.

TEEL-3 (Temporary Emergency Exposure Limits)

The maximum concentration in air below which it is believed nearly all individuals could be exposed without experiencing or developing life-threatening health effects when exposed for up to an hour.

ERGs (Emergency Response Planning Guidelines) – These are similar to the TEELs with the exception that there is no ERG – 0. ERG 1,2 & 3 are almost identical to the TEELs and are used in the same manner.

I hope these definitions are helpful. If you have any questions please contact me:

Chris Herrick, Chief, VHMRT - 802-479-1586 or cherrick@dps.state.vt.us

Fire Safety Training Events

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Division Fire Inspector's Training | GAS APPLIANCE SAFETY | March 14 8:30-2:30 DFS Central Office Berlin VT | Contact M. Greenia |
| NFPA Certified Fire Inspector Training | Module 3 | March 5 - DFS Central Office | Contact B. Patterson |
| | Module 4 | March 12 - Hartford FD | Contact B. Patterson |
| | Module 5 | March 19 - DFS Central Office | Contact B. Patterson |
| | NFPA CFI -1 Certification Exam | March 25 - Hartford FD March 26 - TBA – North | Contact B. Patterson |
| VSFA Fire Fighters Seminar | Variety of Topics | March 29 8:30-3:00 Best Western / Windjammer South Burlington | Contact M. Greenia |

VFIRS – Vermont Fire Incident Reporting System

Current statistics 2007 (as of January 20, 2008)

Total incidents reported: 39,007

Fires: 3249 -- EMS: 13,396 -- NonFire/NonEMS: 16,310 -- No Activity: 29

Fire Departments reporting: 170

Current statistics 2008 (as of February 17, 2008)

Total incidents reported: 2016

Fires: 144 -- EMS: 942 -- NonFire/NonEMS: 923 -- No Activity: 4

Fire Departments reporting: 73

NFIRS:

In 2006, the Division of Fire Safety instituted rules for reporting certain types of incidents to assist in evaluation of the fire problem in Vermont. A review of 2006 and 2007 data shows that these rules are beginning to be applied but many departments have not instituted them.

PLUS-ONE Codes for Cigarettes and Fireworks: In 2006 and 2007, 50 incidents were reported the heat source as a cigarette, only 11 used a Plus-One code to report this. In the same time, fireworks was better, 3 of the 5 fireworks incident were reported using a Plus-One code.

WILDLAND Incident reporting: In 2006 and 2007, 822 wildland incidents were reported; only 251 used the required Wildland Module.

INCIDENT TYPE 100: In 2006 and 2007, 562 fire incidents were reported using the Incident Type 100 (fire, other). One department made specific Plus-One codes for this non-specific incident type.

For all future report, the Vermont specific rules must be followed so that a proper evaluation of fire problems in this state can be conducted.

The original articles from the newsletters are included here:

➤ **Fire-Safe Cigarettes and Fireworks: (June 2006)**

Recent legislation in Vermont for Fire-Safe Cigarettes and Fireworks will have an effect on the State's fire problem. To better study this effect, Plus-One codes have been added to the codes for cigarettes and fireworks in the Heat Source field. [A Plus-One code is additional specificity added to a code already in the NFIRS 5.0 system].

Users of the NFIRS Federal Software do not need to do anything; the codes have been added to the system by this office. Users of Vendor Software must add the Plus-One codes to their local software in the Heat Source field on the Fire Module. Any local Plus-One codes used in this field must be overwritten in favor of the statewide coding.

➤ Fireworks (54)

| Code | Value |
|-------|-----------------------|
| ▪ 541 | Fireworks: VT legal |
| ▪ 542 | Fireworks: VT illegal |
| ▪ 549 | Fireworks: Unknown |

➤ Cigarettes (61)

| Code | Value |
|-------|---------------------------|
| ▪ 611 | Cigarettes: Fire-Safe |
| ▪ 612 | Cigarettes: NON Fire-Safe |
| ▪ 619 | Cigarettes: Unknown |

The Heat Source field has been a required field for any type of fire incident type. Reporting using these Plus-One codes is now required in Vermont. When reporting these incidents, additional information on the brand, style and manufacturer should be included in the narrative section of the report.

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➤ **Wildland Fire Incident Coding: (February 2006)**

The Division of Fire Safety has been working with the Forest Resource Protection Unit of the VT Dept of Forest, Parks & Recreation to make reporting of wildland incidents easier and more consistent for fire departments and fire wardens. The following are guidelines for wildland incidents.

- Incident Types are coded as 140-143 or 170-173 on the Basic Module. This includes all hostile wildland fire incidents: grass, brush, or forest - of any size.
- The Wildland Module must be completed for these incident types. The fields in module must be completed as appropriate for the size of the incident. This provides better data and information for the Forest Resource Protection Unit. Do not use the Fire Module for these incidents.
- Other wildland type related incidents are coded:
 - 561 – unauthorized burning. Where the fire is under control and not endangering property.
 - 631 – authorized burning. Where the fire is under control and has been issued a burn permit.
 - 632 – prescribed fires. Where a written fire plan is approved prior to ignition.
 - If any of these types of fires escapes control it is classified as a hostile fire and must be code as an Incident Type in the 140 or 170 series.

➤ **“Fire, Other” Incident Type Coding: (March 2006)**

A review of 2005 reports shows an increase in the use of the Incident Type 100 Fire, Other.

Over 9% of all fires reported for 2005 are coded as OTHER. These 344 reports do not provide useful information for analysis of the fire problem in the State of Vermont.

- Incident Type 100 Fire, Other is NOT an acceptable code for reporting fire incidents. (Although this is a valid code in the NFIRS system, this is a Vermont reporting requirement)
- There are 34 fire incident types in the system in 7 sub-groups to choose from. These include building/structure fires, vehicle fires, wildland/crop fires, and outside/special fires.
- Any 2006 incident reports already submitted and coded with Incident Type 100 must be changed to an acceptable incident type, the additional required modules for fires/structure fires be completed and the report be re-submitted.

VFIRS News:

- The Division of Fire Safety thanks all departments that submitted valid incident reports for 2007. This data is all ready being used for providing statistics for the current legislative session.
- Those departments that have not submitted incident reports for 2007 must still do so even though the deadline for reporting has passed. The deadline was only to provide a cut off for beginning the data analysis for the Report of the Fire Marshal. The deadline has no effect on the requirements in grants or statute to report incidents.
- No NFIRS class, as noted in previous month's newsletters, has been scheduled. If one is scheduled a new notice will sent out.
- REMINDER: All 2008 data must be NFIRS 5.0 format and be submitted electronically via the bulk import tool or the USFA data entry tool. Paper forms will not be accepted. Email or US Mail submittals will not be accepted.

Additional information on the Bulk Import Tool can be found on the USFA webpage at <https://nfirs.fema.gov/webtools/biu/> or by contacting this office.

If you have any suggestions for NFIRS or VFIRS topics to be included in future newsletters or on the VFIRS website, please send those to the email below.

The VFIRS web page can be located at www.dps.state.vt.us/fire/vfirs/
 If you have any questions about fire incident reporting contact
 Assistant State Fire Marshal Stanley Baranowski at (802) 479-7575 or sbaranow@dps.state.vt.us
 or Micheal Greenia at (802) 479-7587 or mgreenia@dps.state.vt.us



State of Vermont Dept of Public Safety

Division of Fire Safety

www.vtfiresafety.org

CALENDAR OF

FIRE EVENTS

MARCH 2008

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 Time Change | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | |

Mar 4, 2008 ~ Town Meeting Day
Mar 20, 2008 ~ VT Career Chiefs Meeting ~ DFS Office Berlin

~ NATIONAL EVENTS ~
Mar 4, 2008 ~ New Year's Day
Mar 9, 2008 ~ Daylight Savings Time ~ ahead one hour
Mar 10, 2008 ~ Lent Begins
Mar 16, 2008 ~ Palm Sunday
Mar 17, 2008 ~ St Patrick's Day
Mar 21, 2008 ~ Good Friday
Mar 23, 2008 ~ Easter

| Date | Event | Location |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Pumping Apparatus Driver/Operator - Water Supply | Vergennes FD |
| 1 | CPR/AED & First Aid - FF I | Manchester |
| 8 & 9 | Incident Safety Officer | Highgate FS |
| 9 | Hazardous Materials Awareness | Saint Michael's Fire and Rescue |
| 10 | FireAct Grant Workshop | Hartford FS |
| 11 | FireAct Grant Workshop | Brattleboro FS |
| 12 | FireAct Grant Workshop | St. Johnsbury FS |
| 13 | FireAct Grant Workshop | Williston FS |
| 15 & 16 | Introduction to Unified Command Multiagency & Catastrophic Incidents | Brattleboro FS |
| 17, 19, 24, 26 & 29 | Hazardous Materials Operations | Addison FS |
| 22 | Hazardous Materials Awareness | Danby FS |
| 22 | Hazardous Materials Awareness | Johnson FS |
| 30 | Pumping Apparatus Certification Exam | Vergennes FS |

APRIL 2008

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | | |

Apr 17, 2008 ~ VT Career Chiefs Meeting ~ DFS office Berlin

Apr 1, 2008 ~ April Fools Day
Apr 20, 2008 ~ First Day of Passover
Apr 22, 2008 ~ Earth Day
Apr 23, 2008 ~ Administrative Professionals Day
Apr 25, 2008 ~ Arbor Day

| Date | Event | Location |
|---------|---|------------------------|
| 1 & 5 | Wildland Fire Control | Plainfield FF I |
| 8 & 12 | Wildland Fire Control | Jamaica FF I |
| 8 & 12 | Wildland Fire Control | Technical College FF I |
| 12 | NE Intl Mutual Aid Fire School First Five Minutes | Albany - NEIMA |
| 12 & 13 | Personal Protective Equipment/SCBA with the Drager | Albany - NEIMA |
| 12 & 13 | Emergency Vehicle Operations - Pumping Apparatus Driver/Operator | Albany - NEIMA |
| 13 | Advanced Fire Behavior - Flashover | Albany - NEIMA |
| 19 | CPR/AED & First Aid - FF I | North Hyde Park FF I |
| 20 | Live Fire Training - Firefighter I | VTC @ Fire Academy |
| 26 | Addison County Regional Fire School Advanced Fire Behavior - Flashover | Vergennes - ACFA RFS |
| 26 | Hazardous Materials Awareness | Vergennes - ACFA RFS |
| 26 & 27 | Vehicle Extrication - Firefighter II Module | Vergennes - ACFA RFS |
| 26 & 27 | Wildland Fire Control | Vergennes - ACFA RFS |
| 26 & 27 | Water Supply - Pumping Apparatus Driver/Operator | Vergennes - ACFA RFS |
| 27 | Highway Safety - Firefighter I Module | Vergennes - ACFA RFS |

Fire Standard Compliant Cigarettes - Information & Enforcement

On May 1, 2006, Vermont became the second state in the country to require that all cigarettes sold or offered for sale meet the criteria for fire standard compliant cigarettes (also called fire-safe or reduced ignition propensity cigarettes). Since that time twenty other states have passed similar laws. Most importantly the states adjacent to Vermont, and Canada, have similar requirements for fire standard compliant cigarettes so that most cigarettes used in Vermont will soon meet this fire safety standard.

This new law is expected to significantly reduce the number of people killed or injured by fire in Vermont and is designed to limit the risk that a cigarette will ignite upholstered furniture, a mattress, household furnishings or other combustible material. The new cigarettes are designed to stop burning when left unattended, but otherwise have the same characteristics as other cigarettes.

Cigarette manufacturers have options on how to meet the standard. With one exception, the manufacturers have chosen to use a cigarette with a design that uses paper to wrap the cigarette that has bands that are less porous. These bands cause the cigarettes to self-extinguish when the cigarette is not actively smoked.

A list of fire-safe cigarettes approved for sale in Vermont and additional information on fire-safe cigarettes is available at <http://www.dps.state.vt.us/fire/cigarettes/index.html> . Cigarettes on the list have markings on each package, carton and case to indicate the cigarettes meet the fire safety

criteria. Most package marking feature an "FSC" in the vicinity of the UPC. Enforcement of the new law is a cooperative effort between the Department of Public Safety, the Department of Liquor Control and the Office of Attorney General.

The marking is also important when investigating a fire to determine if cigarettes involved in a fire were designed to meet the fire safety criteria or not. The fire standard compliant cigarette technology is new and it is important to determine what type of cigarette was involved with a fire for research and information purposes. The Vermont Fire Incident Reporting System has been modified for fire departments to report more detailed information on a cigarette involved in a fire. If a fire investigator determines additional details about a cigarette after the fire department has filed their initial report the fire investigator should report that information directly to the Division of Fire Safety at vfirs@dps.state.vt.us .

Cigarettes have been the leading cause of civilian fire deaths over the last 10 years with 24% of the fire deaths in Vermont caused by cigarettes. In 2007 there were no fire deaths in Vermont attributed to cigarettes. While cigarettes have been the leading cause of civilian fire deaths they have not been a leading cause of structure fires. In comparing structure fires over the previous 5 years, to the fire data for 2007, there has been a 40% decrease in the number of structure fires caused by cigarettes.

DOLLAR LOSS FROM FIRE - Fire Department & Insurance Company Reporting

The National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) provides a large amount of information on fires and other types of incidents that fire departments respond to, what causes fires, property loss, injuries and death. NFIRS provides the big picture, but to get more specific information on important issues the division uses other sources as well. The Chief Medical Examiner's Office provides information on fire deaths, the Department of Health provides information on injuries from fire and burns through the Hospital Discharge Data and the Department of Labor provides specific information on injuries to firefighters through workers compensation data. The division again conducted a separate survey to collect data from insurance companies to obtain more specific information on property loss. The NFIRS and insurance company data is compiled in the table below for 2003 through 2006. Even though the reporting is incomplete it shows the significant impact of the property loss from fire in Vermont. What the figures don't show is the additional loss in wages to employees who are out of a job after a fire, the loss in tax revenues to municipalities when a building is burned, the loss of business in a community when a business is forced to close after a fire or the cost of health care for the treatment of fire and burn injuries.

| Year | Fire Departments Reporting | Structure Fires Reported | Dollar Loss Fire Departments | Insurance Companies Reporting | Fire Claims Reported | Dollar Loss Insurance Companies | Estimated Total Dollar Loss |
|------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2003 | 149 | 1696 | \$20,489,289 | 118 | 2556 | \$54,425,886 | \$82,500,000 |
| 2004 | 155 | 1780 | 24,023,358 | 118 | 2387 | 63,405,898 | 96,200,000 |
| 2005 | 179/237 | 1927 | 21,816,250 | 118/179 | 2123 | 56,652,195 | 85,900,000 |
| 2006 | 192/237 | 1893 | 23,475,563 | 148/250 | 1073 | 38,216,857 | 64,500,000 |
| 2007 | 178/237 | 1983 | 27,782,274 | | | | |

If you have any questions please contact: Robert Howe, Assistant State Fire Marshal
 [phone] (802) 479-7566 [email] rhowe@dps.state.vt.us [fax] (802) 479-7562

FIRE SAFETY EDUCATION



Micheal D. Greenia

Asst State Fire Marshal Fire Safety Education Coordinator

IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE YOUR CLOCK CHANGE YOUR BATTERY



Help keep your townspeople safe by encouraging them to adopt a simple lifesaving habit.

Change Your Clock Change Your Battery® is a national home fire safety program sponsored by Energizer® batteries and the International Association of Fire Chiefs, with more than 5,900 fire departments participating nationwide. This program, now in its 20th year, has evolved to urge Americans to change smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector batteries when changing their clocks.

We are increasingly challenged with reaching people where they live – in the community and at home. That's why now more than ever, we're looking to the support of fire departments to drive home our lifesaving message at the local level.

As we spring forward and change our clocks on March 9th its time to promote the *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*® campaign. Energizer has created a guidelines kit containing tried-and-true suggestions for implementing the *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery* program in your local community and building awareness through the help of local media and business partners.

Visit <http://www.energizer.com/firesafety/>

To Download the Kit



TOWN MEETING IS A GRATE PLACE FOR FIRE EDUCATION

In March townspeople all over Vermont will take part in a truly unique Vermont event, town meeting. Some Fire departments have found that the entrance to the meeting place is a magnificent location for a display to provide in formation about the department and to present fire safety education on a one on one basis.

Your display should include information about the department and what you do. Not everyone knows all of the things their local fire department is involved in. in fact some believe that that have a full time paid department. Your display should also include fire prevention information as well as tips on how people can keep their families safe.

In this case, the display is not only a fire prevention education tool but it's a PR tool also. These tools that can go a long way to help the department when budget decisions are being made.

DON'T FORGET TO BOOK

THE FIRE SAFETY HOUSE FOR YOUR EVENTS!

Don't miss out this year, now is the time to schedule one of the division's Fire Safety Houses for your community event or open house.



Each Jan 1st we start taking bookings for the year. People need to re-apply to use the trailers each year. Just because it was at your event last year does not mean it's automatically booked for you this year.

Open Dates are filled on a first come first served basis. For additional information or assistance contact Micheal D. Greenia at 802-479-7587. Or visit www.vtiresafety.org and download a sign out form.

SPRING IN TO SAFETY

SEASONAL SAFETY TIPS YOU CAN USE

If you have a backyard sugaring operation, Supervise it at all times. Hot sap can cause tremendous burns and the fire needs watching to make sure it does not get out of control.



It's also a time for spring house cleaning. And it's time to clean out and dispose of those old cans of paint and thinners and accumulated newspapers and magazines. Check your local newspapers for times and locations to drop off household hazardous materials.

When you clean windows check them for ease of opening, you may need them as your 2nd way out in case of fire.

Review and practice your home escape plan.

When using ladders, check for safe and proper placement. Be aware of any obstructions, overhead wires, electrical, cable, phone and tree branches.

Check cords and outlets for fraying or exposed wiring on all electrically operated equipment.

On gas operated equipment, check fuel lines and connectors for leaking fuel.

Never use or store gasoline indoors.

Save the Victrola!

Senior Citizen Fire Safety Education

By Jesse Dobiecki Fire Safety Education Specialist

As fire safety educators, we often tailor our plans, budgets and strategies to the needs of children. While this is a safe and effective practice, another high risk group that can be overlooked in our communities is senior citizens.

In Vermont, senior citizens accounted for 50% of fire fatalities in 2007. Creating and maintaining programs that fit the needs of seniors should be high on our list of priorities. The following are some tips and strategies designed to help your Senior Citizen Fire Safety Education Programs.

First: Where do you find groups of seniors to teach?

Nursing homes and assisted living facilities are easy places to find seniors, but reaching groups of senior citizens that still live at home calls for a little more creative thinking. Examine your community, and find out where seniors tend to congregate. Church events, civic organizations, library groups, and especially town sponsored senior centers are good places to start. Contact your local parks and recreation department, and ask what classes and programs seniors typically sign up for.

Second: What are the lessons we need to teach seniors?

Seniors, as a group of learners, do not need all of the same lessons that we typically teach children. When teaching seniors, the key issues to focus on are:

- Typical Fire Department Response
- Smoke detectors
- CO Detectors
- Escape plans
- Cooking safety
- Smoking safety
- Stop, drop and roll (and acceptable alternatives for those who can't)
- Medical Equipment Fire Safety – especially home oxygen

A main theme in your teaching should be pointing out what has changed since your students were young. "They Don't Make 'em like they used to" is a good lesson title, and it applies to a whole category of information that seniors need to have. Their smoke detectors, homes, TVs – the very clothes on their backs are not made the way they were 60 years ago. This portion of your lesson should be fun and interactive, with either slides or (even better) props of the objects you are discussing, especially the 10 year lithium battery smoke detectors (which don't require battery changes) that are now available.

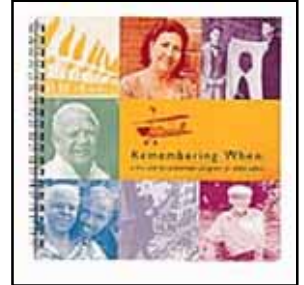
An important topic to cover is typical fire department response in your area, how a call goes from the initial call to the clean-up. This lesson is more important for this group than you might think—a fire safety educator friend of mine was teaching a group of seniors, and when it got to the portion of the lesson regarding "when to call 911", a student responded that she wouldn't, in most cases: "Oh, I wouldn't want to bother you nice young people." The "greatest Generation" Americans are known for, and can be fiercely proud of, their self sufficiency. It is important to honor that while teaching them that it is ok to need help, and to call for that help early in the stages of an emergency.

Third: What is best way to teach these lessons? *Know your audience* should be the mantra of the fire safety educator. In this case, first consider any special physical needs the group has. Don't hand out materials with small print. Don't load PowerPoint presentations up with too much text that could be difficult to read

from the back of the room. Speak clearly and avoid rushing, but take care to avoid a condescending tone – your students are older and possibly hard of hearing, but they won't appreciate being spoken to as if they can't understand concepts. You should know basic facts about the living situation of your audience, ie. Don't talk about home safety if all of your audience members are nursing home residents.

Fourth: What are some resources I can use to help with my senior safety program?

Our website, www.vtfiresafety.org, is a good place to start. There are "Fire Fact Sheets" that can be distributed and used to base lesson plans available for free to download that can be useful to you. There are whole programs for seniors out there, such as NFPA's "Remembering When", which are available from NFPA or may be signed out from the Division of Fire Safety. Contact Mike Greenia, Fire Safety Education Coordinator, for more details. You can also visit the US Fire Administration, where you can find excellent downloadable material, created especially for and about seniors.



Some other general tips regarding teaching senior citizens: Mind your manners:

Build rapport with your students right away. Remember the "good manners" you might have learned as a child. Or, if you didn't learn them, let me give you a little cheat sheet my Nana would be proud of:

- Take off your hat when entering the room.
- If you are in a position to hold a door open for someone, do so.
- Address the group as "ladies and gentleman," and address your students as Mr. or Mrs., until you are corrected.
- Avoid slang as much as possible.
- Ask the group's permission whenever possible, i.e. "Does anyone mind if I turn out the lights so we can see the TV?", "Is it alright if we break now?"

These simple acts of respect will pay huge dividends, and will be tangible displays of how much you care about your students – Seniors are well aware that many of these "good manners" are no longer the norm. They will appreciate your gesture.

It's a family affair:

Talk to seniors about fire safety in the context of family visits as well. Seniors may be more inclined to make changes or think about safety when you discuss how their visiting relatives, such as grandchildren, need to be considered when it comes to fire safety.

"Back when I was a kid..."

When working with children, we are constantly trying to keep the lesson moving and keep the children on task. Working with seniors is different. Encourage them to share their thoughts and stories. Hearing old fire stories is a great opportunity to talk about what has changed. Prepare for this before hand, with information about what might be different if their story were to take place today. Explain how your fire department works, and what they could expect if the Victrola in the parlor, or the Edsel in the barnyard, caught on fire today. If there were large fires in your town's history, research them and ask if anyone in your group remembers them.

Teaching Seniors can be a very rewarding experience for any fire safety educator, and one in which you can sometimes learn as much as you teach. Using a little laughter and patience, you can help keep seniors and their families safe by thinking more about fire safety.





State of Vermont
Division of Fire Safety
1311 US Route 302—Berlin Suite 600
Barre, VT 05641-2351

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Vermont Department of Public Safety

OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL & STATE FIRE ACADEMY

Central Office

1311 US Route 302— Suite 600
Barre, VT 05641-2351
Phone (802) 479-7561 Fax (802) 479-7562
Toll Free (800) 640-2106

HAZMAT Response Team
Phone (802) 479-7586 Fax
(802) 479-7562 Toll Free
(800) 641-5005

Vermont Fire Academy

317 Academy Road
Pittsford, VT 05763
Phone (802) 483-2755 Fax (802) 483-2464
Toll Free (800) 615-3473

Regional Offices:

Barre

1311 US Route 302— Suite 500
Barre, VT 05641-7301
Phone (802) 479-4434 Fax (802) 479-4446
Toll Free 1-888-870-7888

Rutland

56 Howe Street, Building A-Suite 200
Rutland, VT 05701
Phone (802) 786-5867 Fax (802) 786-5872
Toll Free (888) 370-4834

Springfield

100 Mineral Street, Suite 307
Springfield VT 05156-3168
Phone (802) 885-8883 Fax (802) 885-8885
Toll Free 1-866-404-8883

Williston

372 Hurricane Lane, Suite 102
Williston, VT 05495-7151
Phone (802) 879-2300 Fax (802) 879-2312
Toll Free (800) 366-8325

DIVISION OF STATE POLICE—FIRE INVESTIGATION

Waterbury—103 South Main Street, Waterbury, VT 05671-2101— (802) 244-8781—Fax (802) 241-5371